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# *The* **FIFTIES**

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SHORT STORIES FROM SCIENCE FICTION'S GOLDEN AGE  
EDITED BY

**BARRY N. MALZBERG & BILL PRONZINI**





The level of short-story writing during the decade . . . has never been equaled. . . . The best . . . was equal technically to the best of American fiction. . . .

—Barry N. Malzberg  
**Introduction**



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## ***The End of Summer***

Edited by  
**Barry N. Malzberg  
and Bill Pronzini**

**Baronet Publishing Company**

**New York**



THE END OF SUMMER: SCIENCE FICTION OF THE FIFTIES

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## ***Introduction:***

### ***The Fifties***

**Barry Malzberg**

HARRY HARRISON, who himself really got going at the end, called the decade the false spring of science fiction, and Robert Sheckley, whose career corresponded almost exactly with the period, shook his head when we talked about it in January 1973 and said, "Well, I squeezed in a couple of happy years at the beginning, anyway." James Gunn got half his master's thesis into one of the fifty magazines that were published at some point during those years and at least twenty science fiction writers—make it forty—were making an accountant's salary from their trade. By 1960 it was all gone, and it was five bleak years and another country before science fiction began to look hopeful again. Now, although many of the leading writers are still puttering around (and



some like Fred Pohl and A. J. Budrys are having major second careers) it all seems at a great remove, surely as frozen in time, as historical, to the younger writers of this day as the early Gernsback era seemed to my generation. And most of the work, most of the writers need rediscovery. Many will never achieve it.

What happened? A lot of things happened. The massive American News Service, responsible for American magazine distribution, was ruled a monopoly and forced into divestiture. Twenty magazines perished immediately; the sales of the leaders (which had already been drifting) were halved. Inability to reach the audience. But the audience had diminished; it had never been large enough to support more than a few successful magazines, and Sputnik in 1957 had made much science fiction appear, to its fringe audience, bizarre, arcane, irrelevant. There were dangerous matters going on now in space but the sophisticated, rather decadent form which science fiction had become paid little credence to satellites in near orbit.

Much else. Henry Kuttner and Cyril Kornbluth died within a month of one another in early 1958. Kuttner, one of the five major figures of the previous decade, had left science fiction but was constantly reprinted and was only forty-four. Kornbluth, ten years younger, was indisputably at the top rank. These sudden, shattering deaths—one from a heart attack in sleep, the other from a cerebral accident—made a number of their contemporaries question the very sense of their careers. What price any of it? “I was only twenty-three at the time,” Silverberg says, “but I under-



stood that these two men had literally died from writing science fiction and I wondered if I was going to die, too." After ten or twenty years in the three- to five-cent-a-word on acceptance mills.

By 1959 Anthony Boucher, editor of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* had decided to join his original co-editor, J. Francis McComas, in the semiretirement of free-lancing. H. L. Gold, editor of *Galaxy*, had been literally paralyzed by war-induced agoraphobia; he had been steadily less able to function for years and a period of hospitalization (for physical cause) convinced him that he could continue editing no longer. And by 1959, too, only a few steady book markets for science fiction remained. Overproduction, the curse of the field then as ever, had resulted in many publishing catastrophes and only Ace and Doubleday (at \$1,000 advances or less) remained as steady outlets for writers other than the five to ten at top rank. John Campbell had wandered from Dianetics to the Hieronymus Machine to the Finagle Factor and was just beginning to get onto the Dean Drive, meanwhile running stories by what appeared to be no more than a couple of writers under innumerable pseudonyms with the same plot and characters. An unhappy, airless time.

So emphatically so that when science fiction began to pick up again in the mid-sixties, first with the British *New Worlds* and then with the infusion of new writers/approaches in the barbarous colonies, a new audience was unaware of the dimensions of what the fifties had accomplished and talked of the field's "new literary merit," "new relevance," "new excitement," "new stan-



dards" as if nothing innovative had occurred before Ellison or J. G. Ballard. Yet, as that second and less significant false spring of the late sixties and early seventies also ebbs, the true dimensions of the accomplishments of the fifties reappear. However dimly. It is more than time to take another look at them.

Basic facts first and quickly: at the end of the 1940s, science fiction accounted for perhaps fifty books, hardcover and paperback, commercially published in a full year and supported, perhaps, seven magazines, only one of which, *Astounding*, paid decent word rates or was read by other than a juvenile audience. Five years later there were forty magazines jostling for space on the newsstands, hardcover and paperback books were coming out at the rate of two to three hundred a year and one book editor, Donald A. Wollheim at Ace, was publishing alone more science fiction titles a month than had come out in a year in, say, 1943. *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, appearing first in late 1949, and *Galaxy*, whose first issue was dated 1950, were well-financed, carefully edited projects intended to offer serious competition for *Astounding* and, by the inclusion of a wider range of styles and thematic approaches, were seeking an expansion of the science fiction audience. They succeeded immediately—*Galaxy* outsold *Astounding* almost from its inception for the next five years—and behind them, publishers picking up the scent, came a host of magazines. Some, like *Cosmos* or *Space Science Fiction*, lasted only a short time; others, like *Worlds of If* or *Science Fiction*



Adventures, held, through various ownerships, for many years; but through 1958 as magazines collapsed, new magazines replaced them. The growth of the field was astonishing; by 1953 there were forty or fifty times the outlets for science fiction than had existed five years before.

Writers who had struggled honorably through the bleak, building years of the forties, such as Lester del Rey, Theodore Sturgeon, James Blish, found to their astonishment that they could almost make a decent living doing what they had always wanted to do. A new generation of writers who had grown up under the influence of the Campbell decade were able to spring from late adolescence into full-time freelance writing careers: A.J. Budrys, Robert Sheckley, Philip K. Dick. The enormous expansion of the market was further signified for these people by the fact that three of the most prolific writers of the forties, Asimov, Hubbard, and Van Vogt, stopped writing science fiction completely to go into other careers; and Heinlein, doing a long and profitable series of quasi-juveniles for Scribner's, was out of magazine work entirely.

It was a pretty good time for HUAC and science fiction alike. Some historians do not see these factors (SF as underground libertarian literature) as unrelated.

One has to talk, however, about what kind of work was being done to occupy the space that the audience and publishers had created. This can be said at the outset: there has been only a trickle of novels through the fifty-year history of science fiction which have consensually been accepted as



masterpieces, absolute examples of what the field can be at its best. With no exception I can call to mind, all of them were published in the fifties. The jury on seventies' novels is by definition still out (it looks as if *Shadrach in the Furnace*, *Dying Inside*, and *The Dispossessed* are going to make it) but there is virtually no novel of the sixties, however acclaimed, which does not have a substantial clique willing to argue its lack of value for that polarized decade.\* Forties novels of importance, *Slan*, *Final Blackout*, *Sixth Column*, *World/Players of Null A*, *Fury*, even that non-novel *The Martian Chronicles*, look archaic now; primitive. Unfulfilled.

But consider the fifties. *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, *More Than Human*, *Double Star*, *Rogue Moon*, *The Space Merchants*, *Gladiator-at-Law*, *The Stars My Destination*, *The Demolished Man*, *A Case of Conscience*, *Bring the Jubilee*. *Rogue Moon* won no awards; *Canticle* was published in that same year. Kornbluth's *The Syndic* copped no honors; *More Than Human* that year. To remember that *The Demolished Man*, *The Space Merchants*, and *Baby Is Three* (the central and best section of *More Than Human*) all appeared in *Galaxy* within a nine-month period in 1952 is to be awed.

Novels, of course, collect the attention, the reprints and occasionally the money (*The Space Merchants* has probably been over the years still the most financially remunerative of all our genre novels); but science fiction, unlike other

\*Bug Jack Barron, *Stand on Zanzibar*, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *Dune*, *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, *The Einstein Intersection*, *Black Easter*, *Thorns*, and I rest my case.



categories, lives in the short form, a structure which seems perfect to articulate and enact a single speculative conceit which (again arguably) is the task for which science fiction is most suited. The level of short-story writing during the decade has never been equaled in technical expertise and inventiveness, nor have any short stories published within the last fifteen years had the impact upon the field and its audience of what was then appearing routinely in the best-of-the-year anthologies or magazine annuals. No short-story writer in two decades has sprung upon science fiction as did Mark Clifton upon *Astounding* in 1952. There is probably no way in which to teach a young audience (80 per cent of science fiction readers are under twenty-one) that Mark Clifton, dead since 1962 and completely out of print, was for a period of four years the most controversial and influential writer in the magazines. No way to teach them that Floyd L. Wallace, *Galaxy's* Clifton who published novellettes of increasing inventiveness and technical clarity, now also unreprinted although happily alive, taught at least one generation of writers what the conceptual limits of the science fiction story might be.

One of the hazards and horrors of age is the reconsideration of our youthful selves, the vision of subsequent heartbreak superimposed, and the conclusion that we were, hence, fools. Perhaps it is this which has left the fifties almost bereft of significant critical reevaluation and comment because those who could best do the job were there at the time and still feel the pain. They were naive. They know it now. But it seemed possible.



It seemed possible to remake the field. By the end of the forties, Campbell and his best writers had put the technical equipment of the modern short story into the hands of those ready to begin. Hiroshima and television and the Cold War had put into the hands of the new writers and editors what appeared to be an enormous audience for fiction that would truly come to terms with the potential changes in lives caused by new and inexplicable technology. It was Horace Gold's earnest belief that he could have *Galaxy* read by as many people as *The Saturday Evening Post*. Boucher and McComas, world-weary types, had less evangelistic obsession but saw no reason why the audience for literate science fiction should be any smaller than that for literate fiction, period.\* These major editors and John Campbell, who never really lost his sense for a decent story, gathered about them fifty to a hundred writers who, possessed, were willing to try and take the field to the limit of their abilities, knowing that they would not be rejected for ambition. These writers could not sell the top editors everything, of course, but they could write passionately and often, and the overflow—much of high quality—was being laid off to those thirty or forty magazines which appeared and disappeared like flying Dutchmen.

It was a period which had never occurred before mass-market fiction excepting, perhaps, the great pulp romance and detective markets of the thir-

\*The payoff which Boucher, perhaps fortunately, has not lived to see is that there is now in mass-market terms almost no audience for quality fiction whatsoever . . . a fact not unnoted by science fiction editors—not, on balance, a dumb group.



ties. Any writer who understood the genre and could then conjugate a sentence could find a market. Thirty magazines times eight stories a month times twelve meant close to three thousand science fiction stories needed a year—to say nothing of the original anthologies, *Star Science Fiction* and *New Tales of Space and Time*. (Today, magazines and original anthologies combined accommodate, perhaps, three hundred new stories a year.) In 1955 there were in the United States and England, perhaps two to three hundred writers familiar enough with the category and adept enough to sell it. (Today there are over a thousand.) And the book market was not negligible. Wollheim was at Ace, Doubleday had begun a program, Simon & Schuster was dabbling, Signet and Avon were toe-in-the-water and Ballantine, beginning a flourishing program in 1953 with *The Space Merchants*, began by offering advances of \$5,000.

Magazine rates were roughly equivalent to what they are now. The top magazines paid three to five cents a word, the bottom not less than a penny. In New York or anywhere at that time it was possible for one family to live poorly on \$5,000 a year, well on \$10,000. One of no family perhaps half that. It was not difficult to make \$500 a month writing science fiction.

Five hundred dollars a month was, perhaps with rejects and half-finished stories, 25,000 words for a professional and 25,000 words a month is 1,000 a day and most weekends off. A thousand words a day is three typewritten pages: some of us bleed more than others, of course, but three pages is nevertheless only three pages.



There was plenty of time for bull sessions on plans for the field, drinking sessions on ditto, and the exchanging of wives. (These were not wife swappers, these writers, they were wife exchangers. They would divorce and remarry. Nineteen-fifties male science fiction writers were perhaps the last to fall before the so-called new morality: nothing doing unless you were willing to follow it up with signed papers.)

The feeling in this rather insular and isolated circle of writers and their editors was that piece by piece they were remaking not so much the world (Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Hiroshima, McCarthy, Marshall had proven exactly what effect the seers and poets would have on reality) as the field itself, that science fiction was being constructed in an ideal form as it might have been a long time ago if Hugo Gernsback had not, for cynical business reasons, pocketed it into a genre of marvelous invention stories for potential engineers.

Certainly, the best of the magazine work (and it should be pointed out here that *all* of the novels mentioned above appeared originally in the magazines and most had been commissioned and directed by the editors; it was a magazine field then as it is not now) was equal technically to the best of American fiction. Kornbluth's *The Altar at Midnight*, or Bester's *The Men Who Murdered Mohammed*, or Wallace's *Delay in Transit*, or Clifton's *Clerical Error*, or Pohl's *The Day of the Boomer Dukes*, or Sheckley's *Warm* (examples almost at random) were as accomplished and moving as *Seize the Day*, *Franny*, *The Country Husband*, *In the Zoo*, or *The Man Who Studied Yoga*.



There was, however, a tiny little problem. Neither the stories nor the novels, outside of the field, were recognized as such at all.

This failure of science fiction to reach outside its genre audience was not of itself among the factors which blew away the false spring, but it might have been the factor that underlay everything. Science fiction remained small. It remained a small field. The audience upon which it could draw was, perhaps; half a million souls who were being asked to support their forty magazines and three hundred books and with all their dedication, they were too small and too poor to do it. The continuing audience which perceives science fiction as important has never really increased from this half a million since the late forties, the central reason for the boom-and-bust phenomena, as overextension has inevitably run up against a failure of the audience to expand. The only difference between the fifties and seventies is that the fringe audience—those who can be induced to pay for two or three given titles a year through word of mouth or promotion or both—has expanded to several million. No science fiction novel in the fifties sold more than 100,000 copies. Science fiction itself was regarded with disinterest or contempt outside of the genre walls. Its very audience was an unorganized constituency, much like the audiences for contemporary men's magazines. They might like, buy it, need it, but they were not in the main evangelical and those who were simply increased the popular perception of science fiction as a strange field, incestuous and defensive.

The genre made no impression upon the



academic/literary nexus which controls critical perception and audiences in this country. Only two stories from the decade were reprinted in the Martha Foley *Best American Short Stories* annual: Sturgeon's "The Man Who Lost the Sea" (1959) and Judith Merrill's "Dead-Center" (1954). None ever appeared in the *O'Henry Prize Stories*. Not a single story from *Galaxy*, *Astounding*, or *Worlds of If* achieved even the thin gruel of the Foley roll of honor. (Some SF writers did by writing non-SF and publishing it for no payment in the quarterlies, though.) No science fiction writer other than Ray Bradbury, that non-science-fiction writer, appeared in textbooks. No science fiction novels, other than Bradbury's, were reviewed outside the genre departments of the press. Most were ignored. *The Demolished Man* was published in hardcover by Shasta, a semiprofessional press operated by thieves, presumably because no reputable publisher wanted it. *The Space Merchants* stayed in print but subsequent, possibly even finer Pohl/Kornbluth novels, disappeared.

By the time 1958, death, and divestiture rolled around, the genre was already ripe for an end. Many of its best writers were literal burnt-out cases. Aware of the anonymity of their work outside the small enclosure, aware of the necessity to go on and on, just as they had, simply to make an ever more difficult living, most either could write or would write no longer. Probably if ANS had not been subdivided or Horace Gold had stayed well, the field would have collapsed anyway. An entire generation of writers had been used up in the struggle to make science fiction a respectable literary medium. They had won the struggle, and



then they had learned that for all the world had cared, they might not have bothered at all. Some of these writers have done no work at all for fifteen years now. Others have done no good work. A couple have reemerged as if from behind barricades, hurled one cautious story into the editorial mills, and then have run for their lives again.

A very, very few, Pohl and Budrys being the best examples, have returned to do outstanding work, but only after a sabbatical of many years and then at a slow rate. Between *Rogue Moon* in 1959 and his return to science fiction writing three years ago (criticism—and he was the best in the history of the field—does not count), Budrys had published one minor novel and, maybe, two short stories. He might have been the best of them; he certainly had the most profound, subtle mind, the best insight, the deepest perspective.

Gone, then. All gone away. After the energy of the late sixties to early seventies, we are in another slack period now; a return to traditional themes and approaches, editorial hostility or bewilderment at stylistic/thematic innovation, new approaches. Not to complain, particularly: like Kornbluth or particularly Bester, I do not feel that my best work was cut off before fulfillment. Probably things will turn around in a while: new writers, new publishers, new editors . . . most importantly, different politics and a new audience.

But virtually all of the great innovators of the eighties will carry on their work, careers, and lives as if the people of the fifties had never been. They will be unaware of most of it. That work may live in the undertext of the field, influence upon influence upon influence, but these writers will



not know to whom they owe what. That decade, thirty years in the past, will, for most intents and purposes, appear to have been for naught. I think it was. I do think that it was.

Each generation, Don Wollheim once said, has its own tragedy: that it must relearn, on its own, what every generation has had to learn and cannot teach. Betrayal, circumstance, injustice. The Spanish Resistance, the Cold War, Vietnam. And end broken and in silence. No answer. No answer to any of this.

And, pace, Gertrude Stein, I do not, any more, even question.



## *Darwinian Pool Room*

Isaac Asimov

"OF COURSE the ordinary conception of Genesis I is all wrong," I said. "Take a pool room, for instance."

The other three mentally took a pool room. We were sitting in broken-down swivel-chairs in Dr. Trotter's laboratory, but it was no trick at all for them to convert the lab benches into pool tables, the tall ringstands into cues, the reagent bottles into billiard balls and then wait for me to do something with the imaginary layout.

Thetier even raised one finger, closed his eyes and muttered softly, "Pool room!" Trotter, as usual, said nothing at all, but nursed his second cup of coffee. The coffee, also as usual, was horrible, but then I was the newcomer to the group and had not yet callused my gastric lining.

"Now consider the end of a game of pocket pool," I said. "You've got each ball, except the cue-ball, of course, in a given pocket—"

"Wait a while," said Thetier, always the purist. "It doesn't matter which pocket."



"Beside the point. When the game is over, the balls are in various pockets. Right? Now suppose you walk into the pool room when the game is all over, and observe only that final position and try to reconstruct the course of previous events. You have several alternatives."

"Not if you know the rules of the game," said Madend.

"Assume complete ignorance," I said. "You can decide that the balls were pocketed by being struck with the cue-ball, which in turn was struck by the cue. This would be the truth, but not an explanation that is very likely to occur to you spontaneously. It is much more likely that you would decide that the balls were individually placed in their corresponding pockets by hand, or always existed in the pockets as you found them."

"All right," said Thetier, "if you're going to skip back to Genesis, you will claim that by analogy we can account for the universe as either having always existed, having been created arbitrarily as it is now, or having developed through evolution. So what?"

"That's not the alternative I'm proposing at all," I said. "Let us accept the idea of creation for a purpose, and consider only the methods by which such a creation could have been accomplished. It's easy to suppose that God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light, but it's not aesthetic."

"It's simple," said Madend, "and 'Occam's Razor' demands that of alternate possibilities, the simpler be chosen."

"Then why don't you play pool by putting the



balls in the pockets by hand? That's simpler, too, but it isn't the game. Now if you started with the primordial atom—"

"What is that?" asked Trotter craftily.

"Well, call it all the mass-energy of the universe compressed into a single sphere, in a state of minimum entropy—completely at rest, motionless. Now explode that in such a way that all the constituent particles of matter and quanta of energy act, react and interact in a precalculated way, so that just our present universe is created. Wouldn't that be much more satisfactory than simply waving your hand and saying, 'Let there be light'?"

"You mean," said Madend, "like stroking the cue-ball against one of the billiard-balls and sending all fifteen into their predestined pockets?"

"In an aesthetic pattern," I said.

"There's more poetry in the thought of a huge act of direct will," said Madend.

"That depends on whether you look at the matter as a mathematician or a theologian," I said. "As a matter of fact, Genesis I could be made to fit the billiard-ball scheme. The Creator could have spent His time calculating all the necessary variables and relationships into six gigantic equations. Count one 'day' for each equation. After having applied the initial explosive impetus, He would then 'rest' on the seventh 'day', said seventh 'day' being the entire interval of time from that beginning to 4,004 B.C. That interval, in which the infinitely complex pattern of billiard balls is sorting itself out, is obviously of no interest to the writers of the Bible. All two billion



years of it could be considered merely the developing single act of creation."

"You're postulating a teleological universe," said Trotter, "one in which purpose is implied."

"Sure," I said. "Why not? A conscious act of creation without a purpose is ridiculous. Besides which, if you try to consider the course of evolution as the blind outcome of nonpurposive forces, you end up with some very puzzling problems."

"As for instance?" asked Madend.

"As for instance," I said, "the passing away of the dinosaurs."

"What's so hard to understand about that?"

"There's no logical reason for it. Try to name some."

"Law of diminishing returns," said Madend. "The brontosaurus got so massive, it took legs like tree trunks to support him, and at that he had to stand in water and let buoyancy do most of the work. And he had to eat all the time to keep himself supplied with calories. I mean *all* the time. As for the carnivores, they afflicted such armor upon themselves in their race against one another, offensive and defensive, that they were just crawling tanks, puffing under tons of bone and scale. It got to the point where it just didn't pay off."

"Okay," I said, "so the big babies die off. But most of the dinosaurs were *little* running creatures whose mass and armor had not become excessive. What happened to them?"

"As far as the small ones are concerned," put in Thetier, "there's the question of competition. If



some of the reptiles developed hair and warm blood, they could adapt themselves to variations in climate more efficiently. They wouldn't have to stay out of direct sunlight. They would not get sluggish as soon as the temperature dropped below eighty Fahrenheit. They would develop intelligence of a sort. Therefore, they would win the race for food."

"That doesn't satisfy me," I said. "In the first place, I don't think the various saurians were quite such pushovers. They held out for some three hundred million years, you know, which is 299 million more than genus Homo. Secondly, cold-blooded animals still survive, notably insects and amphibia—"

"High rate of reproduction," said Thetier.

"And plenty of reptiles. The snakes, lizards, and turtles are still very much in business. For that matter, what about the ocean? The saurians adapted to that in the shape of ichthyosaurs and plesiosaurs. They vanished, too, and there were no newly developed forms of life based on radical evolutionary advances to compete with them. As near as I can make out, the highest form of ocean life are the fish—mammals aside—and they came before the ichthyosaurs. How do you account for that? The fish are just as cold-blooded and even more primitive. And in the ocean, there's no question of mass and diminishing returns since the water does all the work of support. The sulfur-bottom whale is larger than any dinosaur that ever lived. Another thing. What's the use of talking about the inefficiency of cold blood and saying that, at temperatures below eighty, cold-blooded



animals become sluggish? Fish are very happy at continuous temperatures of about thirty-five, and there is nothing sluggish about a shark."

"Then why did the dinosaurs quietly steal off the Earth, leaving their bones behind?" asked Madend.

"They were part of the plan. Once they had served their purpose, they were gotten rid of."

"How? In a properly arranged Velikovskian catastrophe? A striking comet? The finger of God?"

"No, of course not. They died out naturally and of necessity according to the original precalculation."

"Then we ought to be able to find out what that natural, necessary cause of extinction was."

"Not necessarily. It might have been some obscure failure of the saurian biochemistry, deliberately provided for, some developing vitamin deficiency—"

"It's too complicated," said Thetier.

"It just seems complicated," I maintained. "Supposing it were necessary to pocket a given billiard-ball by making a four-cushion shot. Would you quibble at the complicated course of the cue-ball? A direct hit would be less complicated, but would accomplish nothing. And despite the apparent complication, the stroke would be no more difficult to the master. It would still be a single motion of the cue, merely in a different direction. The ordinary properties of elastic materials and the laws of conservation of momentum would then take over."

"I take it then," said Trotter, "that you suggest



that the course of evolution represents the simplest way in which one could have progressed from original chaos to man."

"That's right. Not a sparrow falls without a purpose, and not a pterodactyl, either."

"And where do we go from here?"

"Nowhere. Evolution is finished with the development of man. The old rules don't apply anymore."

"Oh, don't they?" said Madend. "You rule out the continuing occurrence of environmental variation and of mutations?"

"In a sense, I do," I insisted. "More and more, man is controlling his environment, and more and more he is understanding the mechanism of mutations. Before man appeared on the scene, creatures could neither foresee and guard themselves against shifts in climatic conditions, nor could they understand the increasing danger from newly developing species before the danger had become overwhelming. But now ask yourself this question: What species of organism can possibly replace us and how is it going to accomplish the task?"

"We can start off," said Madend, "by considering the insects. I think they're doing the job already."

"They haven't prevented us from increasing in population about tenfold in the last two hundred and fifty years. If man were ever to concentrate on the struggle with the insects, instead of spending most of his spare effort on other types of fighting, said insects would not last long. We could clean them off the planet."



"What about bacteria, or, better still, viruses?" asked Madend. "The influenza virus of 1918 did a respectable job of getting rid of a sizable percentage of us."

"Sure," I said, "just about one percent. Even the Black Death of the fourteenth century managed to kill only one-third of the population of Europe, and that at a time when medical science was nonexistent. It was allowed to run its course at will, under the most appalling conditions of medieval poverty, filth and squalor, and still two-thirds of our very tough species managed to survive. Disease can't do it."

"What about man himself developing into a sort of superman and displacing the old-timers?" suggested Thetier.

"Not likely," I said. "The only part of the human being which is worth anything, as far as being boss of the world is concerned, is his nervous system; the cerebral hemispheres of the brain, in particular. They are the most specialized part of his organism and therefore a dead end. If there is anything the course of evolution demonstrates, it is that, once a certain degree of specialization sets in, flexibility is lost. Further development can proceed only in greater specialization."

"Isn't that exactly what's wanted?" said Thetier.

"Maybe it is, but as Madend pointed out, specializations have a way of reaching a point of diminishing returns. It's the size of the human head at birth that makes the process difficult and painful. It's the complexity of the human mentality that makes mental and emotional maturity lag so far behind sexual maturity in man, with its



consequent harvest of troubles. It's the delicacy of mental equipment that makes most or all of the race neurotic. How much further can we go without complete disaster?"

"The development," said Madend, "might be in greater stability, or quicker maturity, rather than higher brain-power."

"Maybe, but there are no signs of it. Cro-Magnon man existed ten thousand years ago, and there are indications that modern man is his inferior, if anything, in brain-power. And in physique, too."

"Ten thousand years," said Trotter, "isn't much, evolutionarily speaking. Besides, there is always the possibility of other species of animals developing intelligence, or something better—and don't say there couldn't be anything better."

"We'd never let them. That's the point. It would take hundreds of thousands of years for, let us say, apes or insects to become intelligent, and we'd wipe them out—or else use them as slaves."

"All right," said Thetier. "What about obscure biochemical deficiencies, such as you insisted on in the case of the dinosaurs? Take Vitamin C, for instance. The only organisms that can't make their own are guinea-pigs and primates, including man. Suppose this trend continues and we become impossibly dependent on too many essential food factors. Or what if the apparent increase in the susceptibility of man to cancer continues? Then what will happen?"

"That's no problem," I said. "It's the essence of the new situation, that we are producing all known food-factors artificially, and may eventu-



ally have a completely synthetic diet. And there's no reason to think we won't learn how to prevent or cure cancer some day."

Trotter got up. He had finished his coffee, but was still nursing his cup. "All right, then, you say we've hit a dead end. But what if all this has been taken into the original account? The Creator was prepared to spend three hundred million years letting the dinosaurs develop something or other that would eventually result in mankind—or so you say. Why can't He have figured out a way in which man could use his intelligence and his control of the environment to prepare the next stage of the game? That might be a very tricky part of the pool game."

That stopped me. "How do you mean?"

Trotter smiled at me. "Oh, I was just thinking that it might not be entirely coincidence, and that a new race may be coming and an old one going, entirely through the efforts of this cerebral mechanism." He tapped his temple.

"In what way?"

"Stop me if I'm wrong, but aren't the sciences of nucleonics and cybernetics reaching simultaneous peaks? Aren't we inventing hydrogen bombs and thinking machines at the same time? Is that coincidence—or part of the divine purpose?"

That was about all for that lunch hour. It had begun as logic-chopping just to kill time, but since then—I've been wondering.



## *Afterword* *to* “Darwinian Pool Room”

THIS SHORT-SHORT appeared in the first (October 1950) issue of *Galaxy*. It was Isaac Asimov's first appearance outside of *Astounding* in many years; in his memoirs he writes of his mounting fear, through the late forties, that he was a one-editor writer, that if John Campbell were to leave *Astounding*, Asimov would never be able to publish science fiction again. Asimov responded to Horace Gold's request for Volume One, Number One (Gold wanted to begin his editorial life by appropriating Campbell's writers in a swoop; he did so) with mingled eagerness and dread. He should not have worried. Within two years, Asimov had had two serials (*Tyrann* and *The Caves of Steel*) sold to *Galaxy* and more than a handful of shorter pieces, one of which, “Hostess,” might have been his best.

Two years after that, Asimov along with all of



the major writers of the forties had retreated from the magazines. A doctorate in biochemistry from Columbia, a full-time teaching position at Boston University, and the beginning of his career as perhaps the greatest popular science writer of the century had reduced his output by 90 percent. Between *The Naked Sun* (1957) and *The Gods Themselves* (1972) there were no novels and no more than thirty or forty shorter pieces. A. E. Van Vogt had gone into dianetics auditing and processing, L. Ron Hubbard was dianetics, Henry Kuttner was doing undergraduate and graduate work in psychology and selling suspense novels. Robert Heinlein was doing novels for Scribner's, several of which appeared in the magazines (*The Door into Summer*, *Citizen of the Galaxy*), but the 1956 *Double Star* was his only "adult" novel of the period and between "Year of the Jackpot" (*Galaxy*, 1952) and "All You Zombies" (*F&SF*, 1959) there were no short stories. L. Sprague de Camp, like Asimov, was doing popular nonfiction. Lester del Rey did some magazine editing and published a scattering of short stories, but was largely occupied with a series of juveniles inaugurating a program at Henry Holt. The turnover in writers from the forties to the fifties was, in short, close to 80 percent.

Gold, like all new editors, took time to find his particular editorial vision and its voice (and was fortunate, unlike many new editors, to be given that time) which, properly speaking, probably came about in early 1952, with the publication of Alfred Bester's *The Demolished Man* and the Pohl/Kornbluth *Gravy Planet* two months later. It was clear to him from the inception of *Galaxy* that



the magazine would have to split off from the dominant Campbell *Astounding*, find a new direction and group of writers or merely be imitative; no less than Campbell, it took him a while. That October 1950 *Galaxy*—a serial by Clifford Simak, short stories by Sturgeon and Asimov—would have made a respectable issue of *Astounding*. There was an audience even for an *Astounding* manqué at that time; *Galaxy* was immediately profitable—although its initial, undercapitalized publisher had to sell off the magazine within months. “Darwinian Pool Room,” which needs little comment, now seems even more sensible than it did way back then, thirty years ago.

B. N. M.







# *The Analogues*

Damon Knight

THE CREATURE was like an eye, a globular eye that could see in all directions, encysted in the gray, cloudy mind that called itself Alfie Strunk. In that dimness thoughts squirmed, like dark fish darting; and the eye followed them without pity.

It knew Alfie, knew the evil in Alfie; the tangled skein of impotence and hatred and desire; the equation: Love equals death. The roots of that evil were beyond its reach; it was only an eye. But now it was changing. Deep in its own center, little electric tingles came and went. Energy found a new gradient, and flowed.

A thought shone in the gray cloud that was Alfie—only half-formed, but unmistakable. And a channel opened. Instantly, the eye thrust a filament of itself into that passage.

Now it was free. Now it could act.

The man on the couch stirred and moaned. The doctor, who had been whispering into his ear, drew back and watched his face. At the other end



of the couch, the technician glanced alertly at the patient, then turned again to his meters.

The patient's head was covered to the ears by an ovoid shell of metal. A broad strap of webbing, buckled under his jaw, held it securely. The heads of screw-clamps protruded in three circles around the shell's girth, and a thick bundle of insulated wires led from it to the control board at the foot of the couch.

The man's gross body was restrained by a rubber sheet, the back of his head resting in the trough of a rubber block.

"No!" he shouted suddenly. He mumbled, his loose features contorting. Then, "I wasn't gonna—No! Don't—" He muttered again, trying to move his body; the tendons in his neck were sharply outlined. "Please," he said. Tears glittered in his eyes.

The doctor leaned forward and whispered. "You're going away from there. You're going away. It's five minutes later."

The patient relaxed and seemed to be asleep. A teardrop spilled over and ran slowly down his cheek.

The doctor stood up and nodded to the technician, who slowly moved his rheostat to zero before he cut the switches. "A good run," the doctor mouthed silently. The technician nodded and grinned. He scribbled on a pad, "Test him this aft.?" The doctor wrote, "Yes. Can't tell till then, but think we got him solid."

Alfie Strunk sat in the hard chair and chewed rhythmically, staring at nothing. His brother had told him to wait here while he went down the hall



to see the doctor. It seemed to Alfie that he had been gone a long time.

Silence flowed around him. The room was almost bare—the chair he sat in, the naked walls and floor, a couple of little tables with books on them. There were two doors; one, open, led into the long bare hall outside. There were other doors in the hall, but they were all closed and their bumpy-glass windows were dark. At the end of the hall was a door, and that was closed, too. Alfie had heard his brother close it behind him, with a solid snick, when he left. He felt very safe and alone.

He heard something, a faint echo of movement, and turned his head swiftly. The noise came from beyond the second door in the room, the one that was just slightly ajar. He heard it again.

He stood up cautiously, not making a sound. He tiptoed to the door, looked through the crack. At first he saw nothing; then the footsteps came again and he saw a flash of color: a blue print skirt, a white sweater, a glimpse of coppery hair.

Alfie widened the crack, very carefully. His heart was pounding and his breath was coming faster. Now he could see the far end of the room. A couch, and the girl sitting on it, opening a book. She was about eleven, slender and dainty. A reading lamp by the couch gave the only light. She was alone.

Alfie's blunt fingers went into his trousers pocket and clutched futilely. They had taken his knife away.

Then he glanced at the little table beside the door, and his breath caught. There it was, his own switchblade knife, lying beside the books. His



brother must have left it there and forgotten to tell him.

He reached for it—

“ALFIE!”

He whirled, cringing. His mother stood there, towering twice his height, with wrath in her staring gray eyes; every line of her so sharp and real that he couldn't doubt her, though he had seen her buried fifteen years ago.

She had a willow switch in her hand.

“No!” gasped Alfie, retreating to the wall. “Don't—I wasn't gonna do nothing.”

She raised the switch. “You're no good, no good, no good,” she spat. “You've got the devil in you, and it's just got to be whipped out.”

“Don't, please—” said Alfie. Tears leaked out of his eyes.

“Get away from that girl,” she said, advancing, “Get clean away and don't ever come back. Go on—”

Alfie turned and ran, sobbing in his throat.

In the next room, the girl went on reading until a voice said, “Okay, Rita. That's all.”

She looked up. “Is that all? Well, I didn't do much.”

“You did enough,” said the voice. “We'll explain to you what it's all about someday. Come on, let's go.”

She smiled, stood up—and vanished as she moved out of range of the mirrors in the room below.

The two rooms where Alfie had been tested were empty. Alfie's mother was already gone—gone with Alfie, inside his mind where he could never escape her again, as long as he lived.



Martyn's long, cool fingers gently pressed the highball glass. The glass accepted the pressure, a very little; the liquid rose almost imperceptibly in it. This glass would not break, he knew; it had no sharp edges and if thrown it would not hurt anybody much.

The music of the five-piece combo down at the end of the room was the same—muted, gentle, accommodating. And the alcohol content of the whisky in his drink was twenty-four point five percent.

But men still got drunk, and men still reached for a weapon to kill.

And, incredibly, there were worse things that could happen. The cure was sometimes worse than the disease. We're witch doctors, he thought. We don't realize it yet, most of us, but that's what we are. The doctor who only heals is a servant; the doctor who controls life and death is a tyrant.

The dark little man across the table had to be made to understand that. Martyn thought he could do it. The man had power—the power of millions of readers, of friends in high places—but he was a genuine, not a professional, lover of democracy.

Now the little man raised his glass, tilted it in a quick, automatic gesture. Martyn saw his throat pulse, like the knotting of a fist. He set the glass down, and the soft rosy light from the bar made dragons' eyes of his spectacles.

"Well, Dr. Martyn?" His voice was sharp and rapid, but amiable. This man lived with tension; he was acclimated to it, like a swimmer in swift waters.

Martyn gestured with his glass, a slow, con-



trolled movement. "I want you to see something before we talk. I had two reasons for asking you here. One is that it's an out-of-the-way place, and, as you'll understand, I have to be careful. If Dr. Kusko should learn I'm talking to you, and why—" Martyn moistened his lips. "I'm not ashamed to say I'm afraid of that man. He's a paranoid—capable of anything. But more about that later.

"The other reason has to do with a man who comes here every night. His name is Ernest Fox; he's a machinist, when he works. Over there at the bar. The big man in the checked jacket. See him?"

The other flicked a glance that way; he did not turn his head. "Yeah. The one with the snootful?"

"Yes. You're right, he's very drunk. I don't think it'll take much longer."

"How come they serve him?"

"You'll see in a minute," Martyn said.

Ernest Fox was swaying slightly on the bar stool. His choleric face was flushed, and his nostrils widened visibly with each breath he took. His eyes were narrowed, staring at the man to his left—a wizened little fellow in a big fedora.

Suddenly he straightened and slammed his glass down on the bar. Liquid spread over the surface in a glittering flood. The wizened man looked up at him nervously.

Fox drew his fist back.

Martyn's guest had half-turned in his seat. He was watching, relaxed and interested.

The big man's face turned abruptly, as if someone had spoken to him. He stared at an invisible



something a yard away, and his raised arm slowly dropped. He appeared to be listening. Gradually his face lost its anger and became sullen. He muttered something, looking down at his hands. Then he turned to the wizened man and spoke, apparently in apology; the little man waved his hand as if to say, Forget it, and turned back to his drink.

The big man slumped again on the bar stool, shaking his head and muttering. Then he scooped up his change from the bar, got up and walked out. Someone else took his place almost immediately.

"That happens every night, like clockwork," said Martyn. "That's why they serve him. He never does any harm, and he never will. He's a good customer."

The dark little man was facing him alertly once more. "And?"

"A year and a half ago," Martyn said, "no place in the Loop would let him in the door, and he had a police record as long as your arm. He liked to get drunk, and when he got drunk he liked to start fights. Compulsive. No cure for it, even if there were facilities for such cases. He's still incurable. He's just the same as he was—just as manic, just as hostile. But—he doesn't cause any trouble now."

"All right, doctor, I check to you. Why not?"

"He's got an analogue," said Martyn. "In the classical sense, he is even less sane than he was before. He has auditory, visual and tactile hallucinations—a complete, integrated set. That's enough to get you entry to most institutions, crowded as they are. But you see, ~~these~~ hallucina-



tions are pro-societal. They were put there, deliberately. He's an acceptable member of society, because he has them."

The dark man looked half-irritated, half-interested. He said, "He sees things. What does he see, exactly, and what does it say to him?"

"Nobody knows that except himself. A policeman, maybe, or his mother as she looked when he was a child. Someone whom he fears, and whose authority he acknowledges. The subconscious has its own mechanism for creating these false images; all we do is stimulate it—it does the rest. Usually, we think, it just warns him, and in most cases that's enough. A word from the right person at the right moment is enough to prevent ninety-nine out of a hundred crimes. But in extreme cases, the analogue can actually oppose the patient physically—as far as he's concerned, that is. The hallucination is complete, as I told you."

"Sounds like a good notion."

"A very good notion—rightly handled. In ten years it will cut down the number of persons institutionalized for insanity to the point where we can actually hope to make some progress, both in study and treatment, with those that are left."

"Sort of a personal guardian angel, tailored to fit," said the dark man.

"That's exactly it. The analogue always fits the patient because it is the patient—a part of his own mind, working against his conscious purposes when they cross the prohibition we lay down. Even an exceptionally intelligent man can't defeat his analogue, because the analogue is just as intelligent. Even knowing you've had the treatment doesn't help, although ordinarily the pa-



tient doesn't know. The analogue, to the patient, is absolutely indistinguishable from a real person—but it doesn't have any of a real person's weaknesses."

The other grinned. "Could I get one to keep me from drawing to inside straights?"

Martyn did not smile. "That isn't quite as funny as it sounds. There's a very real possibility that you could, about ten years from now . . . if Kusko has his way—and that's exactly what I want you to help prevent."

The tall, black-haired young man got out of the pickup and strolled jauntily into the hotel lobby. He wasn't thinking about what he was going to do; his mind was cheerfully occupied with the decoration of the enormous loft he had just rented on the Lower East Side. It might be better, he thought, to put both couches along one wall, and arrange the bar opposite. Or put the Capehart there, with an easy chair on either side?

The small lobby was empty except for the clerk behind his miniscule counter and the elevator operator lounging beside the cage. The young man walked confidently forward.

"Yes, sir?" said the clerk.

"Listen," said the young man, "there's a man leaning out a window upstairs, shouting for help. He looks sick."

"What? Show me."

The clerk and the elevator operator followed him out to the sidewalk. The young man pointed to two open windows. "It was one of those, the ones in the middle on the top floor."

"Thanks, mister."



The young man said, "Sure," and watched the two hurry into the elevator. When the doors closed behind them, he strolled in again and watched the indicator rise. Then, for the first time, he looked down at the blue rug. It was almost new, not fastened down, and just the right size. He bent and picked up the end of it.

"Drop it," said the voice.

The young man looked up in surprise. It was the man, the same man that had stopped him yesterday in the furniture store. Was he being followed?

He dropped the rug. "I thought I saw a coin under there."

"I know what you thought," the man said. "Beat it."

The young man walked out to his pickup and drove away. He felt chilly inside. Suppose this happened every time he wanted to take something—?

The dark man looked shrewdly at Martyn. "All right, doctor. Spill the rest of it. This Dr. Kusko you keep talking about—he's the head of the Institute, right? The guy who developed this process in the first place?"

"That's true," said Martyn, heavily.

"And you say he's a paranoid. Doesn't that mean he's crazy? Are you asking me to believe a crazy man could invent a thing like this?"

Martyn winced. "No, he isn't crazy. He's legally as sane as you or I, and even medically we would only call him disturbed. What we mean when we speak of a paranoid is simply that—well, here is a man who, if he did become insane, would be paranoiac. He belongs to that type. Meanwhile, he



has unreal attitudes about his own greatness and about the hostility of other people. He's a dangerous man. He believes that he is the one man who is right—standing on a pinnacle of rightness—and he'll do anything, anything, to stay there."

"For instance?" the dark man said.

"The Institute," Martyn told him, "has already arranged for a staff of lobbyists to start working for the first phase of its program when the world legislature returns to session this fall. Here's what they want for a beginning:

"One, analogue treatment for all persons convicted of crime 'while temporarily insane,' as a substitute for either institutionalization or punishment. They will argue that society's real purpose is to prevent the repetition of the crime, not to punish."

"They'll be right," said the dark man.

"Of course. Second, they want government support for a vast and rapid expansion of analogue services. The goal is to restore useful citizens to society, and to ease pressure on institutions, both corrective and punitive."

"Why not?"

"No reason why not—if it would stop there. But it won't." Martyn took a deep breath and clasped his long fingers together on the table. It was very clear to him, but he realized that it was a difficult thing for a layman to see—or even for a technically competent man in his own field. And yet it was inevitable, it was going to happen, unless he stopped it.

"It's just our bad luck," he said, "that this development came at this particular time in history. It was only thirty years ago, shortly after the war,



that the problem of our wasted human resources really became so acute that it couldn't be evaded any longer. Since then we've seen a great deal of progress, and public sentiment is fully behind it. New building codes for big cities. New speed laws. Reduced alcoholic content in wine and liquor. Things like that. The analogue treatment is riding the wave.

"It's estimated that the wave will reach its maximum about ten years from now. And that's when the Institute will be ready to put through the second phase of its program. Here it is:

"One, analogue treatment against crimes of violence to be compulsory for all citizens above the age of seven."

The dark man stared at him. "Blue balls of fire. Will it work, on that scale?"

"Yes. It will completely eliminate any possibility of a future war, and it will halve our police problem."

The dark man whistled. "Then what?"

"Two," said Martyn, "analogue treatment against speculation, bribery, collusion and all the other forms of corruption to be compulsory for all candidates for public office. And that will make the democratic system foolproof, for all time."

The dark man laid his pencil down. "Dr. Martyn, you're confusing me. I'm a libertarian, but there's got to be some method of preventing this race from killing itself off. If this treatment will do what you say it will do, I don't care if it does violate civil rights. I want to go on living, and I want my grandchildren—I have two, by the way—to go on living. Unless there's a catch you haven't told me about this thing, I'm for it."



Martyn said earnestly, "This treatment is a crutch. It is not a therapy, it does not cure the patient of anything. In fact, as I told you before, it makes him less nearly sane, not more. The causes of his irrational or antisocial behavior are still there, they're only repressed—temporarily. They can't ever come out in the same way, that's true; we've built a wall across that particular channel. But they will express themselves in some other way, sooner or later. When a dammed-up flood breaks through in a new place, what do you do?"

"Build another levee."

"Exactly," said Martyn. "And after that? Another, and another, and another—"

Nicholas Dauth, cold sober, stared broodingly at the boulder that stood on trestles between the house and the orchard. It was a piece of New England granite, marked here and there with chalk lines.

It had stood there for eight months, and he had not touched a chisel to it.

The sun was warm on his back. The air was still; only the occasional hint of a breeze ruffled the treetops. Behind him he could hear the clatter of dishes in the kitchen, and beyond that the clear sounds of his wife's voice.

Once there had been a shape buried in the stone. Every stone had its latent form, and when you carved it, you felt as if you were only helping it to be born.

Dauth could remember the shape he had seen buried in this one: a woman and child—the woman kneeling, half bent over the child on her lap. The balancing of masses had given it grace



and authority, and the free space had lent it movement.

He could remember it; but he couldn't see it anymore.

There was a quick, short spasm in his right arm and side, painful while it lasted. It was like the sketch of an action: turning, walking to where there was whisky—meeting the guard who wouldn't let him drink it, turning away again. All that had squeezed itself now into a spasm, a kind of tic. He didn't drink now, didn't try to drink. He dreamed about it, yes, thought of it, felt the burning ache in his throat and guts. But he didn't try. There simply wasn't any use.

He looked back at the unborn stone, and now, for an instant, he could not even remember what its shape was to have been. The tic came once more. Dauth had a feeling of pressure building intolerably inside him, of something restrained that demanded exit.

He stared at the stone, and saw it drift away slowly into grayness; then nothing.

He turned stiffly toward the house. "Martha!" he called.

The clatter of dishware answered him.

He stumbled forward, holding his arms out. "Martha!" he shouted. "I'm blind!"

"Correct me if I'm wrong," said the dark man. "It seems to me that you'd run into that kind of trouble only with the actual mental cases, the people who really have strong compulsions. And, according to you, those are the only ones who should get the treatment. Now, the average man doesn't have any compulsion to kill, or steal, or



what have you. He may be tempted, once in his life. If somebody stops him, that one time, will it do him any harm?"

"For a minute or two, he will have been insane," said Martyn. "But I agree with you—if that were the end of it, there'd be no great harm. At the Institute, the majority believe with Kusko that that will be the end of it. They're tragically wrong. Because there's one provision that the Institute hasn't included in its program, but that would be the first thought of any lawmaker in the world. *Treatment against any attempt to overthrow the government.*"

The dark man sat silent.

"And from there," said Martyn, "it's only one short step to a tyranny that will last till the end of time." For an instant his own words were so real to him that he believed it would happen in spite of anything he could do: he saw the ghostly figure of Kusko—big, red-haired, grinning, spraddle-legged over the whole earth.

The other nodded. "You're right," he said. "You are so right. What do you want me to do?"

"Raise funds," said Martyn, feeling the beginning of a vast relief. "At present the Institute has barely enough to operate on a minimum scale, and expand very slowly, opening one new center a year. Offer us a charitable contribution—tax-deductible, remember—of two million, and we'll grab it. The catch is this: the donors, in return for such a large contribution, ask the privilege of appointing three members of the Institute's board of directors. There will be no objection to that, so long as my connection with the donation isn't known, because three members will not give the



donors control. But they will give me a majority on this one issue—the second phase of the Institute's program.

"This thing is like an epidemic. Give it a few years, and nothing can stop it. But act now, and we can scotch it while it's still small enough to handle."

"Good enough. I won't promise to hand you two million tomorrow, but I know a few people who might reach into their pockets if I told them the score. I'll do what I can. Hell, I'll get you the money if I have to steal it. You can count on me."

Smiling, Martyn caught the waiter as he went by. "No, this is mine," he said, forestalling the dark man's gesture. "I wonder if you realize what a weight you've taken off my shoulders?"

He paid, and they strolled out into the warm summer night. "Incidentally," Martyn said, "there's an answer to a point you brought up in passing—the weakness of the treatment in the genuinely compulsive cases, where it's most needed. There are means of getting around that, though not of making the treatment into a therapy. It's a crutch, and that's all it will ever be. But for one example, we've recently worked out a technique in which the analogue appears, not as a guardian, but as the object of the attack—when there is an attack. In that way, the patient relieves himself instead of being further repressed, but he still doesn't harm anybody—just a phantom."

"It's going to be a great thing for humanity," said the dark man seriously, "instead of the terrible thing it might have been except for you, Dr. Martyn. Good night!"

"Good night," said Martyn gratefully. He



watched the other disappear into the crowd, then walked toward the El. It was a wonderful night, and he was in no hurry.

A big, red-haired guy came in just as the waiter was straightening the table. The waiter stiffened his spine automatically: the big guy looked like Somebody.

"Which table was he sitting at—the tall man with the glasses who just went out?" The red-haired guy showed him a folded bill, and the waiter took it smoothly.

"This one right here," he said. "You a friend of his?"

"No. Just checking up."

"Well," said the waiter cheerfully, "they ought to keep him at home. See here?" He pointed to the two untouched drinks that stood at one side of the table, opposite where the tall man had been sitting. "Sits here for over half an hour—buys four drinks, leaves two of them setting there. And talks, like there was somebody with him. You know him? Is he crazy or what?"

"Not crazy," said Dr. Kusko gently. "Some would call him 'disturbed,' but he's harmless—now."







## *Afterword* *to* “The Analogues”

ALTHOUGH DAMON KNIGHT had published science fiction in the lesser magazines as early as 1941, and although his first important sale, “Not with a Bang,” appeared in *Fantasy & Science Fiction* (a year after “Tiger Ride,” with James Blish, had appeared in *Astounding*), he was perhaps the best exemplification of the writers whose careers became intertwined with H. L. Gold’s *Galaxy*. And, like the work of Robert Sheckley or Philip Klass (William Tenn), any true understanding of Knight’s style or vision would be inextricably linked to an analysis of what Gold was trying to do with his magazine.

Part of what Gold was trying to do (see the afterword to “The Altar at Midnight”) was to produce stories which could have credibly run in credible mass-market magazines of the future; but the major thrust of his editorial career was to open



up dystopia to genre science fiction. Pre-Gernsback writers had freely engaged in anti-technological speculation, but the direction of science fiction for twenty-five years after the first *Amazing* was in the direction of technological celebration. Gold, cajoling sardonic work from sardonic writers, thought that the imagined future needed a good deal of revision, and the contribution of *Galaxy* to the 1950s was as probably significant as that of *Astounding* to the forties. In stories like "Four-in-One," "Stranger Station," and "Natural State," Knight framed elegant suspicions; and before he got away from his career in fiction, becoming primarily an editor, critic, and anthologist, was perhaps one of the five best stylists in the history of the field at the time.

With all of this, it is somewhat ironic—but purposefully so—that "The Analogues" is not from *Galaxy* but from *Astounding* . . . one of only two stories (the other was the 1964 "Satisfaction") which Knight sold alone to this magazine. It is, in subject and style (ascerbic, controlled, hostile to technology) a story typical of his output for *Galaxy* and is included in this anthology for two reasons: (a) it is an excellent story on its own terms and one of his least reprinted; (b) it indicates that editorial stereotypes are meant to be defied. It was neither the first nor the last un-*Astounding* story which John Campbell published in this decade. Campbell, like all good editors, was willing to make a virtue of inconsistency; he frequently published fiction seemingly anathema to his stated philosophy (Tom Godwin's "The Cold Equations" is perhaps the best example), and there is more than a suspicion that



if Campbell had not been forced progressively into stereotype, abandoned by many of his best writers who went over to *Galaxy*, and compelled as a hard commercial decision to stake out the position in the market left to him, *Astounding* might have been a far different magazine—and might have remained, right until Campbell's death, central to the development of the field rather than being pushed inexorably through the sixties to its borders.

Damon Knight, born in 1922 in Hood River, Oregon, is still publishing occasional fiction; and his autobiographical *The Futurians*, published in 1977, is another contribution to the True Unwritten History of Science Fiction. Much of his work, happily, remains in print.

B. N. M.







# *love*

Richard Wilson

HE WAS from Mars and she was from Earth; and you know what they thought of Martians in those days. He wasn't very tall, as Martians weren't; but that was all right, because she was unusually tiny and only came to his shoulder. They made fun of a Martian's anatomy then. There were a lot of jokes made by professional so-called comedians, just as it had once been considered funny to tell stories about Jews and Scotsmen.

Maybe Jac wasn't much to look at, by the standards of Earth model agencies, but he was intelligent and kind and Ellen loved him. She shouldn't have told her father that, she knew now. It had been difficult enough to be with Jac before the night she'd gone to her father with the confession of her love. He'd stormed up and down the living room of their house at the edge of the spaceport. He'd talked about position and family and biological impossibility. He'd invoked the memory of her dead mother and reminded her of the things he had sacrificed to give her the education he'd

never had: the special schools and the tutoring. He said that if she could see this Martian—this Jac person—she'd understand his point of view and thank him for his efforts to spare her the anguish she would experience as a girl who had crossed the planet line. He didn't stop till he had brought tears to the blind eyes of his daughter.

Only then did he become calm and, with a faint twinge of conscience, tell her as gently as he could that she was not to see the boy again. He would see Jac, he told her, and explain to him that the thing was impossible.

Ellen felt her way to her room and locked the door against him, and finally she heard her father go down the hall and slam his own door.

She refused to go down for breakfast the next morning. She waited till she heard her father leave the house to go to his job in the weather station of the spaceport. Then she left by the back way.

She heard the rattle of Pug's chain against the kennel and his bark of greeting. She knelt and took the paw he offered. It had been broken once and never properly set. She stroked it gently, although it no longer hurt him; it just made him limp. Ellen unhooked the chain from his collar and fastened a short leash to it. She and the dog went through the streets and into the Martian section of the town.

The whole community had been the Martian's originally. But after the coming of the Earth people they'd been gradually uprooted and forced into one end of town. Spidertown, she'd heard some people call it. Damn people like that, she



thought. People like her father! "Damn them," she said aloud. And Pug growled in sympathy.

She bent down to pet him. He whimpered inquiringly. "Poor crippled Pug," she said. "A blind girl, a lame dog, and a Martian. Outcasts, Pug. That's us." Then she shrugged off her self-pity and walked on.

There was only one really bad crossing. It was a highway and the ore trucks rolled along it all day long, carrying their loads to the spaceport and the great Earthbound cargo ships. But the traffic man at the edge of the highway knew her and walked across with her and Pug.

"Beautiful morning, Miss Hanson," he said.

She said it smelled good and the air felt real fresh and thanked him.

Jac met her in the park at the edge of the lake. She tingled to the touch of his hand on her arm. His fingers were slender and quite bony and his arm, when he put hers in his, was thin. But he was strong, she knew: once he had picked her up and carried her across a rough patch of ground in the hills where they sometimes walked. He had carried her effortlessly, she remembered, and she had heard the strange rhythm of his heart as she leaned her head against his hard chest.

"Hello, Jac," she said, and Pug wagged his tail so furiously that it beat against her leg. Pug didn't care if Jac was a Martian, and she wished her father had as much judgment.

They went arm-in-arm across the park to the meadows beyond. Pug was unleashed now and frisked about them, his bark echoing flatly in the Martian air.



"This is a beautiful day—one should be so happy," Jac said. "And yet you look unhappy. Why?"

And so Ellen told him, and Jac was silent. For a long time they walked in silence until the ground began to rise and Ellen knew they were nearing the hills.

Jac said at last, "Your father is a good man and the things he wishes for you are things I cannot give you."

"If you're going to sound like my father," she told him, "I won't listen."

Then he was silent again for a time, but soon he began to speak seriously, and the gist of what he said was that she must forget him because he had been selfish about her. He said he had never really considered that there would be more to their life than just the two of them, and that they must not break her father's heart.

And she asked him, what about her heart? And his, too, he said.

And so they were silent again.

"Where are we?" she asked, after a while. They had been climbing for some time.

"I don't know," he said. "I have been thinking too much about us."

"Are we lost?"

"No," he said. "I can see the way we have come. But this is a part of the hills I don't know. You must be tired from the climb. We will rest."

They sat on the soft moss-covered ground amid some rocks and she leaned against his chest. Was he so different from Earth men? she wondered. It was so hard to know—for a blind person to know. If she could see Jac, would her father's warnings



mean more to her? Or was her father merely intolerant of anyone who was different?

She had known so few men. Mostly, after childhood, her companions had been men who were kind to her for her father's sake. Many of them had been good fun and friendly, but none had ever been interested in her as a woman. Why should they waste their time with a blind girl? They hadn't, and Ellen had known no intimacy, no real happiness, until Jac.

But now she asked herself if she really loved him, as she maintained to her father, or whether she was grateful to him. What did she know of love? If she had once loved an Earth man, could she now love Jac?

It was so difficult. Her standards were confused. She did not even know what an Earth man looked like.

"Let me touch you, Jac," she said.

He gave her his hand and she seemed to feel his eyes on her face.

Her fingers traveled up his familiar arm, to his shoulder. The shoulder was bony and sharp, but so was hers. His neck was thick and his chin was not so well defined as her father's. Jac's nose was broader, too, and his eyes were sunk deep in his head. The head was hairless, not partially, like her father's, but completely. Ellen knew it was not usual for Earth men to be hairless, not men as young as Jac. Ellen put her hand against his chest. It was hard and rounded and there was that strange rhythm of his heartbeat. She took her hand away.

"How do I seem to you?" she asked.

If their races were so different, wouldn't he be

repelled by her—by the thought of her body and his together in marriage?

“You are beautiful to me, Ellen,” he said. “You are lovely.”

She sighed.

“But this does not mean that I would seem attractive to you,” he went on. “I must say to you truthfully that I believe Earth people are more appealing to Martians—from an aesthetic point of view, if not a political one—than Martians are to Earth people. But,” he added, “I believe a Martian retains his good physical attributes until death. He does not become fat, or senile, or ill. He doesn’t wrinkle and sag as do some of your people. I think this is in favor of your happiness.”

“I must seem cruel to you,” Ellen said, “to be so questioning of our love.”

“No,” Jac said, “you have a special problem. You must really know me before you can be sure.”

Would he look strange if I could see him? she thought. Would I be ashamed that he is bald and big-nosed and chinless? She used these descriptions in her thoughts deliberately to see if they bothered her. Would the rest of his body disgust me if I knew it? I know him to be intelligent and loving, brave and devoted, honest and good. But would these qualities have meant anything to me, if I had been able to see and I had discovered them in him?

There was no answer.

“Where’s Pug?” she asked.

“I don’t know. He went over a rise some time ago.”

Ellen stood up. “Let’s look for him. You must want to know where we are, anyhow.”



They walked slowly in the direction the dog had gone. The way was rocky and the path seemed to become narrower. It grew chill as the sun became hidden by a cliff. They walked along the base of the cliff and soon a second cliff was on the other side and they were in a canyon.

Jac described it to her as they went.

Suddenly he touched her elbow and they stopped.

"Now I know where we are," he said. "I've never been here before, but I know from the stories I've heard."

"Where?"

"This is the Valley of the Stars. We have a legend that it was first found at night. And at the end of it is the Cave of Violet Light. It's a beautiful legend. The Cave was found long ago. Then the way to it became lost. That was many years ago, before my father's time. But it is just as his father described it. The walls of the Valley are carved with lifelike figures from our antiquity. Here, some of the carvings are down low and you can feel them."

He placed her fingers and she traced out figures of people.

"We do not know what period of our history they represent, but the figures are Martian. Here," he said, "is the carving of a very young child—and a woman." He led her fingers.

Hesitantly, her fingers explored the carvings while his hand rested reassuringly on her shoulder. "The figures are unclothed," she said.

"Yes."

The carvings were right to her touch and yet elusively, indefinitely wrong. Perhaps she could

not judge the relative proportions. She could not tell. She became uneasy. "Why, it's only a baby—the child," she said.

"No," Jac said. "The child is three or four years old."

Her hand dropped.

Jac took her arm. "Come," he said, "we'll see if Pug went this way. Toward the Cave."

She walked in silence beside him.

"The Cave is the real source of the legend. The Cave of the Violet Light. They say it is magic. They say it has healing properties—the Violet Light, That whoever stands in its glow is made well. That the lame walk, and the deaf hear, and the—"

He stopped, and Ellen felt him looking at her.

"Yes?" she said. "And the blind?"

"And the blind see."

Jac continued, "It is a legend that linked with a time when we Martians ceased to become ill and to suffer the effects of age and deterioration. Our forefathers, so cured, bestowed the gift on all their descendants."

There was a barking in the Valley, echoing around a bend, and in a moment the dog was frisking toward them.

Ellen knelt and petted him.

"Hello, you Pug," she said. "Were you exploring? Were you in the Cave of the Violet Light?"

She could feel the dog's body moving as the tail wagged hugely.

"Were you?" she asked. "Were you in the Cave? Let me have your paw!"

The dog extended his paw to Ellen. She felt it.



"The other one!" she cried.

It, too, was whole. No bump or sign of a break anywhere.

"Jac!" she cried. "Does he limp? Pug, I mean. Is he healed?"

"Silly girl. It's just a legend."

"Look at him!" she said. "Does he limp?"

"No. It is amazing, but he's well. Come here, Pug. Let me see your paw. The bad one. He is well, Ellen."

"Oh, Jac!"

"I have never really believed it possible—and never really disbelieved," he said slowly. "I suppose we Martians are less preoccupied with miraculous cures because we have so little need of them."

"But, Jac, it must be true!"

He took her hand, and they started down the Valley of the Stars in the direction of the Cave.

"Here is the bend," Jac said. "And there is the Cave."

"Describe it to me," she said. "Tell me how it looks."

"The entrance is like a triangle. As high as three men. There is rubble of fallen rock in front and a little way inside. And then it is clean and the floor is smooth, polished rock. And farther back there is a violet glow. It seems to come from the slanting walls, and the floor is like a deep pond."

"I've never seen in my life," Ellen said. "I was born sightless."

She felt herself trembling.

"I'm told violet is a beautiful color," she said. "Is it beautiful?"

"It is the most beautiful color I've seen. It's past description. It's so beautiful that you must be able to feel it if the light touches you."

Then he asked: "Will you go in?" His voice was hushed. It caressed her and soothed her and she stopped trembling. She loved him, now, the way she knew him. His thin hand was gentle and strong—holding hers.

The words leaped into her mind: Bald. Big-Nosed. Chinless. What did these words mean visually? What were ugliness and beauty to one who had never seen anything?

She remembered the figures her fingers had traced in the wall of the Valley of the Stars. The woman. The child—who was not a baby.

And she shivered.

Jac's hand tightened until her hand hurt. "You are afraid you will see me and find me ugly. In your mind they have made me something monstrous because I am different!"

"Let us go away," she said miserably. "I love you."

He was silent for a long while.

"If the Cave will let you see me," he said at last, "then you must. In the darkness, shadows become terrible things."

Her hand touched his face gently. He kissed the slim, cold fingers.

"Will you go in?"

"Yes," she whispered.



## *Afterword* *to*

### *“love”*

THIS SENSITIVE story is, of course, as much about racial prejudice in contemporary society as it is about a union between an alien and an Earthwoman. It was something of a “delicate” story for its time. Controversial and “message” themes were generally eschewed by the pre-1950 pulps; their readers, it was said, preferred escapist science-adventure fiction. “Love” would not have been published at all in the thirties and might not have been in the forties; that it found a ready market and was well-received in 1952 is testimony not only to the then-budding maturation of science fiction, but to the then-budding maturation of the American outlook on civil rights. (Another such “delicate”—and cautionary—tale on a different theme is Fredric Brown’s “The Weapon,” published in *Astounding* in 1950, which would have been included in these pages except for certain permission difficulties.)

The fact that "Love" originally appeared in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* is also significant. Anthony Boucher, who with J. Francis McComas founded *F&SF* in 1949 and edited it through its first several years, was in his own way as much responsible as H. L. Gold and John Campbell for the coming-of-age of science fiction. A brilliant editor and one of the most demanding critics and students of the field, Boucher understood perhaps better than anyone the need to "depulp" science fiction: to put emphasis on character development, quality of writing, and innovative ideas and extrapolations. He particularly encouraged subject matter considered taboo by other editors; his only criteria were good taste and literary excellence.

That Boucher succeeded in publishing science fiction and fantasy which measured up to these standards is evidenced by the number of classic and near-classic stories which first appeared in those early years of *F&SF*. Poul Anderson's "Three Hearts and Three Lions," Charles Beaumont's "The Vanishing American," Alfred Best-er's "Fondly Fahrenheit," Shirley Jackson's "One Ordinary Day, with Peanuts," C. M. Kornbluth's "The Silly Season," Damon Knight's "Not with a Bang," Richard Matheson's "Born of Man and Woman," Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*—the list is long and distinguished.

Richard Wilson is the author of a number of other fine fifties science fiction stories, many of which feature his effective and mordant brand of humor and satiric commentary. The best of these—"QRM," "The Tunnel Under the World," "Honor," and others—appear in his Ballantine



collections *Those Idiots from Earth* (1957) and *Time Out for Tomorrow* (1962).

For additional information on Wilson and his work, an autobiographical sketch written at editorial request follows.

B. P.

In the early fifties I had just joined Reuters' New York bureau after the demise of another wire service, Transradio Press, and began to eke out my salary with extracurricular writing. Reuters had a rule against free-lancing but made an exception for fiction writers. It had been nearly ten years since I'd written science fiction, and "Love" was born at this time. It was literally a dream story. I'd awakened before dawn with the story complete in my mind and wrote all 3,000 words at once, in longhand. It has since been translated into Italian, Spanish, French, and Japanese.

I'd written a few articles and a war novel but no science fiction since the early forties. That novel, rejected at all the best houses, remains unpublished today. As the responsibilities of marriage and fatherhood grew, I began to write more and more science fiction—both for the money and because the field had fewer restrictions and taboos than any other form of popular fiction.

I owe a lot to magazine editors Tony Boucher, Horace Gold, Larry Shaw, Fred Pohl, Ted Carnell, and Doc Lowndes for their encouragement, and to book publishers Betty Ballantine and Don Wollheim. Their checks made the difference between

marginal and comfortable living. In fact, my earnings from science fiction in the fifties amounted to seven-eighths of the cost of the big old house I bought in Rockland County.

Robert A. W. Lowndes—we Futurians still know him as Doc—took many a writer's pet story when no other editor wanted it. "Honor," a sequel to "Love," is an example. It was rejected by an even dozen editors before Doc gave it a home in *Science Fiction Quarterly*. It has since been anthologized and was produced on radio by the BBC.

My first published novel, *The Girls from Planet 5*, was written days as I baby-sat my infant son before I went to work on Reuters' night shift. Other parts of it were written in postmidnight spurts when I broke my commuting pattern once a week to bunk at Dave Kyle's apartment on Manhattan's West Side—in a tenement block that also housed, at one time or another, Bob Sheckley, Lester del Rey, Charlie Dye, and Frank Belknap Long.

Occasionally, in those quiet news times when Reuters could close its radioteletype circuit to London at midnight, it was possible to do some personal work at the office. Especially on the graveyard shift, when the South African slot man stretched out on the news desk and slept with a telephone directory for a pillow, I was able to type final drafts of mss.

Many of my stories then had a news background, and one of them, "QRM," was literally set in Reuters' old newsroom in the New York Times Building on West 43rd Street. Only the



names were changed. My novel, *30-Day Wonder*, also used that background.

The commute from Rockland County precluded much New York social life, but I fondly remember meetings of the Hydra Club, evenings at Horace Gold's, an early Milford writers conference with Damon Knight, Jim Blish, Boucher, Kurt Vonnegut, Mildred Clingerman, and Avram Davidson, and visits with the Pohls, del Reys, and A. J. Budryses at Red Bank.

Richard Wilson





# *Sam Hall*

**Poul Anderson**

CLICK. BZZZ. WHRRR.

Citizen Blank Blank, Anytown, Somewhere, U.S.A., approaches the hotel desk. "Single with bath."

"Sorry, sir, our fuel ration doesn't permit individual baths. We can draw one for you; that will be twenty-five dollars extra."

"Oh, is that all? Okay."

Citizen Blank takes out his wallet, extracts his card, gives it to the registry machine, an automatic set of gestures. Aluminum jaws close on it, copper teeth feel for the magnetic encodings, electronic tongue tastes the life of Citizen Blank.

Place and date of birth. Parents. Race. Religion. Educational, military, and civilian service records. Marital status. Children. Occupations, from the beginning to the present. Affiliations. Physical measurements, fingerprints, retinals, blood type. Basic psychotype. Loyalty rating. Loyalty index as a function of time to moment of last test given. Click, click. Bzzz.

"Why are you here, sir?"

"Salesman. I expect to be in Cincinnati tomorrow night."

The clerk (32 yrs., married, two children; NB, confidential: Jewish. To be kept out of key occupations) punches buttons.

Click, click. The machine returns the card. Citizen Blank puts it back in his wallet.

"Front!"

The bellboy (19 yrs., unmarried; NB confidential: Catholic. To be kept out of key occupations) takes the guest's suitcase. The elevator creaks upstairs. The clerk resumes his reading. The article is entitled "Has Britain Betrayed Us?" Companion articles in the magazine include "New Indoctrination Program for the Armed Forces," "Labor Hunting on Mars," "I Was a Union Man for the Security Police," "More Plans for YOUR Future."

The machine talks to itself. Click, click. A bulb winks at its neighbor as if they shared a private joke. The total signal goes out over the wires.

Accompanied by a thousand others, it shoots down the last cable and into the sorter unit of Central Records. Click, click. Bzzz. Whrrr. Wink and glow. The distorted molecules in a particular spool show the pattern of Citizen Blank, and this is sent back. It enters the comparison unit, to which the incoming signal corresponding to him has also been shunted. The two are perfectly in phase; nothing wrong. Citizen Blank is staying in the town where, last night, he said he would, so he has not had to file a correction.

The new information is added to the record of Citizen Blank. The whole of his life returns to the memory bank. It is wiped from the scanner and



comparison units, that these may be free for the next arrival.

The machine has swallowed and digested another day. It is content.

Thornberg entered his office at the usual time. His secretary glanced up to say "Good morning," and looked closer. She had been with him for enough years to read the nuances in his carefully controlled face. "Anything wrong, chief?"

"No." He spoke harshly, which was also peculiar. "No, nothing wrong. I feel a bit under the weather, maybe."

"Oh." The secretary nodded. You learned discretion in the government. "Well, I hope you get better soon."

"Thanks. It's nothing." Thornberg limped over to his desk, sat down, and took out a pack of cigarettes. He held one for a moment in nicotine-yellowed fingers before lighting it, and there was an emptiness in his eyes. Then he puffed ferociously and turned to his mail. As chief technician of Central Records, he received a generous tobacco ration and used it all.

The office was a windowless cubicle, furnished in gaunt orderliness, its only decorations pictures of his son and his late wife. Thornberg seemed too big for the space. He was tall and lean, with thin straight features and neatly brushed graying hair. He wore a plain version of the Security uniform, insignia of Technical Division and major's rank but none of the ribbons to which he was entitled. The priesthood of Matilda the Machine were a pretty informal lot.

He chain-smoked his way through the mail.

Most was related to the changeover. "Come on, June," he said. Recording and later transcription sufficed for routine stuff, but best that his secretary take notes as well while he dictated anything unusual. "Let's get this out of the way fast. I've got work to do."

He held a letter before him. "To Senator E. W. Harmison, S.O.B., New Washington. Dear Sir: In re your communication of the 14th inst., requesting my personal opinion of the new ID system, may I say that it is not a technician's business to express opinions. The directive that every citizen shall have a single number for his records—birth certificate, education, rations, taxes, wages, transactions, public service, family, travel, etc.—has obvious long-range advantages, but naturally entails a good deal of work both in re-conversion and interim data control. The President having decided that the gain justifies our present difficulties, the duty of citizens is to conform, not complain. Yours, and so forth." He let a cold smile flicker. "There, that'll fix him! I don't know what use Congress is anyway, except to plague honest bureaucrats."

Privately, June decided to modify the letter. Maybe a senator was only a rubber stamp, but you couldn't brush him off that curtly. Part of a secretary's job is to keep the boss out of trouble.

"Okay, let's get to the next," said Thornberg. "To Colonel M. R. Hubert, Director of Liaison Division, Central Records Agency, Security Police, etc. Dear Sir: In re your memorandum of the 14th inst., requiring a definite date for completion of the ID conversion, may I respectfully state that it is impossible for me honestly to set



one. You realize we must develop a memory-modification unit which will make the changeover in our records without our having to take out and alter each of three hundred million spools. You realize too that we cannot predict the exact time needed to complete such a project. However, research is progressing satisfactorily (refer him to my last report, will you?), and I can confidently say that conversion will be finished and all citizens notified of their numbers within three months at the latest. Respectfully, and so on. Put that in a nice form, June."

She nodded. Thornberg continued through his mail, throwing most into a basket for her to answer alone. When he was done he yawned and lit a fresh cigarette. "Praise Allah that's over. Now I can get down to the lab."

"You have afternoon appointments," she reminded him.

"I'll be back after lunch. See you." He got up and went out of the office.

Down the escalator to a still lower sublevel, walking along a corridor, he returned the salutes of passing subordinates automatically. His expression did not bespeak anything; perhaps the stiff swinging of his arms did.

Jimmy, he thought. Jimmy, boy.

At the guard chamber, he presented hand and eye to the scanners. Finger and retinal patterns were his pass. No alarm sounded. The door opened for him and he walked into the temple of Matilda.

She squatted huge, tier upon tier of control panels, meters, indicator lights to the lofty ceiling. The spectacle always suggested to Thornberg

an Aztec pyramid, whose gods winked red eyes at the acolytes and suppliants creeping about base and flanks. But they got their sacrifices elsewhere.

For a moment Thornberg stood and watched. He smiled again, a tired smile that creased his face on the left side only. A recollection touched him, booklegged stuff from the forties and fifties of the last century which he had read: French, German, British, Italian. The intellectuals had been fretful about the Americanization of Europe, the crumbling of old culture before the mechanized barbarism of soft drinks, hard sells, enormous chrome-plated automobiles (dollar grins, the Danes had called them), chewing gum, plastics. . . . None of them had protested the simultaneous Europeanization of America: bloated government, unlimited armament, official nosiness, censors, secret police, chauvinism. . . . Well, for a while there had been objectors, but first their own excesses and sillinesses discredited them, then later. . . .

Oh, well.

But Jimmy, lad, where are you now, what are they doing to you?

Thornberg sought a bench where his top engineer, Rodney, was testing a unit. "How're you coming along?" he asked.

"Pretty good, chief." Rodney didn't bother to salute. Thornberg had, in fact, forbidden it in the labs as a waste of time. "A few bugs yet, but we're chasing them out."

The project was, essentially, to develop a gimmick that would change numbers without altering anything else—not too easy a task, since the



memory banks depended on individual magnetic domains. "Okay," said Thornberg. "Look, I want to run a few checks myself, out of the main coordinator. The program they've written for Section Thirteen during the conversion doesn't quite satisfy me."

"Want an assistant?"

"No, thanks. I just want not to be bothered."

Thornberg resumed his way across the floor. Hardness resounded dully under his shoes. The main coordinator was in a special armored booth nestled against the great pyramid. He must go through a second scan before the door admitted him. Not many were allowed in here. The complete archives of the nation were too valuable to risk.

Thornberg's loyalty rating was AAB-2—not absolutely perfect, but the best available among men and women of his professional caliber. His last drugged checkup had revealed certain doubts and reservations about government policy, but there was no question of disobedience. *Prima facie*, he was certainly bound to be loyal. He had served with distinction in the war against Brazil, losing a leg in action; his wife had been killed in the abortive Chinese rocket raids ten years ago; his son was a rising young Space Guard officer on Venus. He had read and listened to illegal stuff, blacklisted books, underground and foreign propaganda—but then, every intellectual dabbled with that; it was not a serious offense if your record was otherwise good and if you laughed off what the things said.

He sat for a moment regarding the board inside



the booth. Its complexity would have baffled most engineers, but he had been with Matilda so long that he didn't even need the reference tables.

Well . . .

It took nerve, this. A hypnoquiz was sure to reveal what he was about to do. But such raids were, necessarily, in a random pattern. He wouldn't likely be called up again for years, especially given his rating. By the time he was found out, Jack should have risen far enough in the Guard ranks to be safe.

In the privacy of the booth Thornberg permitted himself a harsh grin. "This," he murmured to the machine, "will hurt me worse than it does you."

He began punching buttons.

Here were circuits which could alter the records, take out an entire spool and write whatever was desired in the molecules. Thornberg had done the job a few times for high officials. Now he was doing it for himself.

Jimmy Obrenowicz, son of his second cousin, had been hustled off at night by Security Police on suspicion of treason. The file showed what no private citizen was supposed to know: the prisoner was in Camp Fieldstone. Those who returned from there, not a big percentage, were very quiet, and said absolutely nothing about their experiences. Sometimes they were incapable of speech.

The chief of the Technical Division, Central Records, had damn well better not have a relative in Fieldstone. Thornberg toiled at the screens and buttons for an hour, erasing, changing. The job was tough; he had to go back several generations, altering lines of descent. But when he was



through, James Obrenowicz had no kinship whatsoever to the Thornbergs.

And I thought the world of that boy. Well, I'm not doing this for me, Jimmy. It's for Jack. When the cops pull your file, later today no doubt, I can't let them find you're related to Captain Thornberg on Venus and a friend of his father.

He slapped the switch that returned the spool to the memory banks. *With this act do I disown thee.*

After that he sat for a while, relishing the quiet of the booth and the clean impersonality of the instruments. He didn't even want to smoke. Presently, though, he began to think.

So now they were going to give every citizen a number, one number for everything. Already they discussed tattooing it on. Thornberg foresaw popular slang referring to the numbers as "brands" and Security cracking down on those who used the term. Disloyal language.

Well, the underground was dangerous. It was supported by foreign countries who didn't like an American-dominated world—at least, not one dominated by today's kind of America, though once "U.S.A." had meant "hope." The rebels were said to have their own base out in space somewhere and to have honeycombed the country with their agents. That could well be. Their propaganda was subtle: we don't want to overthrow the nation; we simply want to restore the Bill of Rights. It could attract a lot of unstable souls. But Security's spy hunt was bound to drag in any number of citizens who had never meditated treason. Like Jimmy—or had Jimmy been an undergrounder after all? You never knew. Nobody ever told you.

There was a sour taste in Thornberg's mouth. He grimaced. A line of a song came back to him. "*I hate you one and all.*" How had it gone? They used to sing it in his college days. Something about a very bitter character who'd committed a murder.

Oh, yes. "Sam Hall." How did it go, now? You needed a gravelly bass to sing it properly.

Oh, my name it is Sam Hall, it is Sam Hall.

Yes, my name is Sam Hall, it is Sam Hall.

Oh, my name it is Sam Hall,

And I hate you one and all,

Yes, I hate you one and all, God damn your eyes.

That was it. And Sam Hall was about to swing for murder. Thornberg remembered now. He felt like Sam Hall himself. He looked at the machine and wondered how many Sam Halls were in it.

Idly, postponing his return to work, he punched for the data-name, Samuel Hall, no further specifications. The machine mumbled. Presently it spewed out a stack of papers, micro-printed on the spot from the memory banks. Complete dossier on every Sam Hall, living and dead, from the time the records began to be kept. To hell with it. Thornberg chucked the sheets down the incinerator slot.

"Oh, I killed a man, they say, so they say—"

The impulse was blinding in its savagery. They were dealing with Jimmy at this moment, probably pounding him over the kidneys, and he, Thornberg, sat here waiting for the cops to requisition Jimmy's file, and there was nothing he could do. His hands were empty.



By God, he thought, *I'll give them Sam Hall!*

His fingers began to race; he lost his nausea in the intricate technical problem. Slipping a fake spool into Matilda wasn't easy. You couldn't duplicate numbers, and every citizen had a lot of them. You had to account for each day of his life.

Well, some of that could be simplified. The machine had existed for only twenty-five years; before then, records had been kept in a dozen different offices. Let's make Sam Hall a resident of New York, his dossier there lost in the bombing thirty years ago. Such of his papers as were in New Washington had also been lost, in the Chinese attack. That meant he simply reported as much detail as he could remember, which needn't be a lot.

Let's see. "Sam Hall" was an English song, so Sam Hall should be British himself. Came over with his parents, oh, thirty-eight years ago, when he was three, and got naturalized with them; that was before the total ban on immigration. Grew up on New York's Lower East Side, a tough kid, a slum kid. School records lost in the bombing, but he claimed to have gone through the tenth grade. No living relatives. No family. No definite occupation, just a series of unskilled jobs. Loyalty rating IBA-O, which meant that purely routine questions showed him to have no political opinions that mattered.

Too colorless. Give him some violence in his background. Thornberg punched for information on New York police stations and civilian-police officers destroyed in the last raids. He used them as the source of records that Sam Hall had been continually in trouble—drunkenness, disorderly



conduct, brawls, a suspicion of holdups and burglary, but not strong enough to warrant calling in Security's hypnotechnicians for quizzing him.

Hmm. Better make him 4-F, no military service. Reason? Well, a slight drug addiction; men weren't so badly needed nowadays that hopheads had to be cured. Neocoke didn't impair the faculties too much. Indeed, the addict was abnormally fast and strong under the influence, though he suffered a tough reaction afterwards.

Then he would have had to put in an additional term of civilian service. Let's see. He spent his four years as a common laborer on the Colorado Dam project. In such a mess of men, who would remember him? At any rate, it would be hard finding somebody who did.

Now to fill in. Thornberg called on a number of automatic devices to help him. He must account for every day in twenty-five years; but of course the majority would show no change of circumstances. Thornberg punched for cheap hotels, the kind which didn't bother keeping records of their own after the data went to Matilda. Who could remember a shabby individual patron? For Sam Hall's current address he chose the Triton, a glorified flophouse on the East Side not far from the Craters. At present his man was unemployed, putatively living off savings, likelier off odd jobs and petty crime. Oh, blast! Income tax returns. Thornberg could be sketchy in creating those, however. The poor weren't expected to be meticulous, nor were they audited annually like the middle class and the rich.

Hmm . . . physical ID. Make him of average height, stocky, black-haired and black-eyed, a



bent nose, a scar on his forehead—tough-looking, though not enough to be unusually memorable. Thornberg entered the precise measurements. Fingerprints and retinals being encoded, they were easy to fake; he wrote a censor into his ongoing program, lest he duplicate somebody else's by chance.

Finally he leaned back and sighed. The record was still shot full of holes, but he could plug those at his leisure. The main job was done—a couple of hours' hard work, utterly pointless, except that he had blown off steam. He felt a lot better.

He glanced at his watch. Time to get back on the job, son. For a rebellious moment he wished no one had ever invented clocks. They had made possible the science he loved, but they had then proceeded to mechanize man. Oh, well, too late now. He left the booth. The door closed itself behind him.

About a month later, Sam Hall committed his first murder.

The night before, Thornberg had been at home. His rank entitled him to good housing in spite of his living alone: two rooms and bath on the ninety-eighth floor of a unit in town, not far from the camouflaged entrance to Matilda's underground domain. The fact that he was in Security, even if he didn't belong to the manhunting branch, got him so much deference that he often felt lonely. The superintendent had offered him his daughter once—"Only twenty-three, sir, just released by a gentleman of marshal's rank, and looking for a nice patron, sir." Thornberg had refused, trying not to be prissy about it. Autres

temps, autres mœurs—but still, she wouldn't have had any choice about getting client status, the first time anyway. And Thornberg's marriage had been a long and happy one.

He had been looking through his bookshelves for something to read. The Literary Bureau was trumpeting Whitman as an early example of Americanism, but though Thornberg had always liked the poet, his hands strayed perversely to a dog-eared volume of Marlowe. Was that escapism? The L.B. was very down on escapism. These were tough times. It wasn't easy to belong to the nation which was enforcing peace on a sullen world. You must be realistic and energetic and all the rest, no doubt.

The phone buzzed. He clicked on the receiver. Martha Obrenowicz's plain plump face showed in the screen; her gray hair was wild and her voice a harsh croak.

"Uh—hello," he said uneasily. He hadn't called her since the news of her son's arrest. "How are you?"

"Jimmy is dead," she told him.

He stood for a long while. His skull felt hollow.

"I got word today that he died in camp," said Martha. "I thought you'd want to know."

Thornberg shook his head, back and forth, quite slowly. "That isn't news I ever wanted, Martha," he said.

"It isn't right!" she shrieked. "Jimmy wasn't a traitor. I knew my son. Who ought to know him better? He had some friends I was kind of doubtful of, but Jimmy, he wouldn't ever—"

Something cold formed in Thornberg's breast. You never knew when calls were being tapped.



"I'm sorry, Martha," he said without tone. "But the police are careful about these things. They wouldn't act till they were sure. Justice is in our traditions."

She regarded him for a long time. Her eyes held a hard glitter. "You too," she said at last.

"Be careful, Martha," he warned her. "I know this is a blow to you, but don't say anything you might regret later. After all, Jimmy may have died accidentally. Those things happen."

"I—forgot," she said jerkily. "You . . . are in Security . . . yourself."

"Be calm," he said. "Think of it as a sacrifice for the national interest."

She switched off on him. He knew she wouldn't call him again. And he couldn't safely see her.

"Good-bye, Martha," he said aloud. It was like a stranger speaking.

He turned back to the bookshelf. Not for me, he told himself. For Jack. He touched the binding of *Leaves of Grass*. Oh, Whitman, old rebel, he thought, a curious dry laughter in him, are they calling you *Whirling Walt* now?

That night he took an extra sleeping pill. His head still felt fuzzy when he reported for work, and after a while he gave up trying to answer the mail and went down to the lab.

While he was engaged with Rodney, and making a poor job of understanding the technical problem under discussion, his eyes strayed to Matilda. Suddenly he realized what he needed for a cathartic. He broke off as soon as possible and went into the coordinator booth.

For a moment he paused at the keyboard. The day-by-day creation of Sam Hall had been an odd

experience. He, quiet and introverted, had shaped a rowdy life and painted a rugged personality. Sam Hall was more real to him than many of his associates. Well, I'm a schizoid type myself. *Maybe I should have been a writer.* No, that would have meant too many restrictions, too much fear of offending the censor. He had done exactly as he pleased with Sam Hall.

He drew a breath and punched for unsolved murders of Security officers, New York City area, during the past month. They were surprisingly common. Could dissatisfaction be more general than the government admitted? But when the bulk of a nation harbors thoughts labeled treasonous, does the label still apply?

He found what he wanted. Sergeant Brady had incautiously entered the Crater district after dark on the twenty-seventh on a routine checkup mission; he had worn the black uniform, presumably to give himself the full weight of authority. The next morning he had been found in an alley, his skull shattered.

Oh, I killed a man, they say, so they say.

Yes, I killed a man, they say, so they say.

I beat him on the head,

And I left him there for dead,

Yes, I left him there for dead, God damn his eyes.

Newspapers had no doubt deplored this brutality perpetrated by the treacherous agent of enemy powers. ("Oh, the parson, he did come, he did come.") A number of suspects had been rounded up and given a stiff quizzing. ("And the



sheriff, he came too, he came too.) Nothing was proven as yet, though a Joe Nikolsky (fifth-generation American, mechanic, married, four children, underground pamphlets found in his room) had been arrested yesterday on suspicion.

Thornberg sighed. He knew enough of Security methods to be sure they would get somebody for such a killing. They couldn't allow their reputation for infallibility to be smirched by a lack of conclusive evidence. Maybe Nikolsky had done the crime—he couldn't prove he had simply been out for a walk that evening—and maybe he hadn't. But, hell's fire, why not give him a break? He had four kids. With such a black mark, their mother would find work only in a recreation house.

Thornberg scratched his head. This had to be done carefully. Let's see. Brady's body would have been cremated by now, but of course there had been a thorough study first. Thornberg withdrew the dead man's file from the machine and microprinted a replica of the evidence—zero. Erasing that, he entered the statement that a blurred thumbprint had been found on the victim's collar and referred to ID labs for reconstruction. In the ID file he inserted the report of such a job, finished only yesterday due to a great press of work. (Plausible. They were busy lately on material sent from Mars, seized in a raid on a rebel meeting place.) The probable pattern of the whorls was—and here he inserted Sam Hall's right thumb.

He returned the spools and leaned back in his chair. It was risky; if anyone thought to query the ID lab, he was in trouble. But that was unlikely. The chances were that New York would accept



the findings with a routine acknowledgement which some clerk at the lab would file without studying. The more obvious dangers were not too great either: a busy police force would not stop to ask if any of their fingerprint men had actually developed that smudge; and as for hypnoquizzing showing Nikolsky really was the murderer, well, then the print would be assumed that of a passerby who had found the body and not reported it.

So now Sam Hall had killed a Security officer—grabbed him by the neck and smashed his brainpan with a weighted club. Thornberg felt considerably happier.

New York Security shot a request to Central Records for any new material on the Brady case. An automaton compared the codes and saw that fresh information had been added. The message flashed back, plus the dossier on Sam Hall and two others—for the reconstruction could not be absolutely accurate.

The two were safe, as it turned out. Both had alibis. The squad that stormed into the Triton Hotel and demanded Sam Hall met blank stares. No such person was registered. No one of that description was known there. A thorough quizzing corroborated this. Then Sam Hall had managed to fake an address. He could have done that easily by punching the buttons on the hotel register when nobody was looking. Sam Hall could be anywhere!

Joe Nikolsky, having been hypnoed and found harmless, was released. The fine for possessing subversive literature would put him in debt for the next few years—he had no influential friends



to get it suspended—but he'd be all right if he watched his step. Security sent out an alarm for Sam Hall.

Thornberg derived a sardonic amusement from watching the progress of the hunt as it came to Matilda. No man with the ID card had bought tickets on any public transportation. That proved nothing. Of the hundreds who vanished every year, some at least must have been murdered for their cards, and their bodies disposed of. Matilda was set to give the alarm when the ID of a disappeared person showed up somewhere. Thornberg faked a few such reports, just to give the police something to do.

He slept more poorly each night, and his work suffered. Once he met Martha Obrenowicz on the street—passed by hastily without greeting her—and couldn't sleep at all, even after maximum permissible drugging.

The new ID system was completed. Machines sent notices to every citizen, with orders to have their numbers tattooed on the right shoulder blade within six weeks. As each center reported that such-and-such a person had had the job done, Matilda changed the record appropriately. Sam Hall, AX-428-399-075, did not report for his tattoo. Thornberg chuckled at the AX symbol.

Then the telecasts flashed a story that made the nation exclaim. Bandits had held up the First National Bank in Americatown, Idaho (formerly Moscow), collecting a good five million dollars in assorted bills. From their discipline and equipment it was assumed that they were rebel agents, possibly having come in a spaceship from their unknown interplanetary base, and that the raid

was intended to help finance their nefarious activities. Security was cooperating with the armed forces to track down the evildoers, and arrests were expected hourly, etc., etc.

Thornberg went to Matilda for a complete account. It had been a bold job. The robbers had apparently worn plastic face masks and light body armor under ordinary clothes. In the scuffle of the getaway one man's mask had slipped aside—only for a moment, but a clerk who saw had, under hypnosis, given a fairly good description. A brown-haired, heavy-set fellow, Roman nose, thin lips, toothbrush mustache.

Thornberg hesitated. A joke was a joke; and helping poor Nikolsky was perhaps morally defensible; but aiding and abetting a felony which was in all likelihood an act of treason—

He grinned to himself, with scant humor. It was too much fun playing God. Swiftly he changed the record. The crook had been of medium height, dark, scar-faced, broken-nosed. . . . He sat for a while wondering how sane he was. How sane anybody was.

Security Central requisitioned complete data on the incident and any correlations the logic units could make. The description they got could have fitted many men, but geography left just a single possibility. *Sam Hall*.

The hounds bayed forth. That night Thornberg slept well.

Dear Dad,

Sorry I haven't written before. We've been too busy here. I myself was on patrol duty in



the Austin Highlands. The idea was, if we can take advantage of reduced atmospheric pressure at that altitude to construct a military spaceport, a foreign country might sneak in and do the same, probably for the benefit of our domestic insurrectionists. I'm glad to say we found nothing. But it was grim going for us. Frankly, everything here is. Sometimes I wonder if I'll ever see the sun again. And lakes and forests—life; who wrote that line about the green hills of Earth? My mind feels rusty as well. We don't get much to read, and I don't care for the taped shows. Not that I'm complaining, of course. This is a necessary job.

We'd hardly gotten back when we were bundled into bathyplanes and ferried to the lowlands. I'd never been there before—thought Venus was awful, but you have to get down in that red-black ocean of hell-hot air, way down, before you know what "awful" means. Then we transferred straight to mobile sealtanks and went into action. The convicts in the new thorium mine were refusing to work on account of conditions and casualties. We needed guns to bring them to reason. Dad, I hated that. I actually felt sorry for the poor devils, I don't mind admitting it. Rocks and hammers and sluice hoses against machine guns! And conditions are rugged. They ~~DELETED BY CENSOR~~ someone has to do that job too, and if no one will volunteer, for any kind of pay, they have to assign convicts. It's for the state.

Otherwise nothing new. Life is pretty monotonous. Don't believe the adventure stories. Adventure is weeks of boredom punctuated by moments of being scared gutless. Sorry to be so brief, but I want to get this on the outbound rocket. Won't be another for a couple of months. Everything well, really. I hope the same for you and live for the day we'll meet again. Thanks a million for the cookies—you know you can't afford to pay the freight, you old spendthrift! Martha baked them, didn't she? I recognized the Obrenowicz touch. Say hello to her and Jim for me. And most of all, my kindest thoughts go to you.

As ever,  
Jack

The telecasts carried "Wanted" messages for Sam Hall. No photographs of him were available, but an artist could draw an accurate likeness from Matilda's description, and his truculent face began to adorn public places. Not long thereafter, the Security offices in Denver were wrecked by a grenade tossed from a speeding car that vanished into traffic. A witness said he had glimpsed the thrower, and the fragmentary picture given under hypnosis was not unlike Sam Hall's. Thornberg doctored the record a bit to make it still more similar. The tampering was risky; if Security ever became suspicious, they could easily check back with their witnesses. But the chance was not too big to take, for a scientifically quizzed man told everything germane to the subject which his



memory, conscious, subconscious, and cellular, held. There was never any reason to repeat such an interrogation.

Thornberg often tried to analyze his motives. Plainly, he disliked the government. He must have contained that hate all his life, carefully suppressed from awareness, and recently it had been forced into his conscious mind. Not even his subconscious could have formulated it earlier, or he would have been caught by the loyalty probes. The hate derived from a lifetime of doubts (Had there been any real reason to fight Brazil, other than to obtain those bases and mineral concessions? Had the Chinese attack perhaps been provoked—or even faked, for their government denied it?) and the million petty frustrations of the garrison state. Still—the strength of his feelings! The violence!

By creating Sam Hall he had struck back. But that was an ineffectual blow, a timid gesture. Most likely his basic motive was simply to find a half-way safe release. In Sam Hall he lived vicariously the things that the beast within him wanted to do. Several times he had intended to discontinue his sabotage, but it was like a drug: Sam Hall was becoming necessary to his own stability.

The thought was alarming. He ought to see a psychiatrist—but no, the doctor would be bound to report his tale, he would go to camp, and Jack, if not exactly ruined, would be under a cloud for the rest of his life. Thornberg had no desire to go to camp, anyway. His existence had compensations, interesting work, a few good friends, art and music and literature, decent wine, sunsets and



mountains, memories. He had started this game on impulse, and now he was simply too late to stop it.

For Sam Hall had been promoted to Public Enemy Number One.

Winter came, and the slopes of the Rockies under which Matilda lay were white beneath a cold greenish sky. Air traffic around the nearby town was lost in that hugeness: brief hurtling meteors against infinity, ground traffic that could not be seen from the Records entrance. Thornberg took the special tubeway to work every morning, but he often walked the ten kilometers back, and his Sundays were usually spent in long hikes over slippery trails. That was a foolish thing to do alone in winter, except that he felt reckless.

He was in his office shortly before Christmas when the intercom said: "Major Sorensen to see you, sir. From Investigation."

Thornberg felt his stomach tie itself into a cold knot. "All right," he answered in a voice whose levelness surprised him. "Cancel any other appointments." Security Investigation took AAA priority.

Sorensen walked in with a clack of bootheels. He was a big blond man, heavy-shouldered, face expressionless, eyes pale and remote as the winter sky. His black uniform fitted him like a skin; against it, the lightning badge of his service glittered frosty. He halted before the desk. Thornberg rose to give him an awkward salute.

"Please sit down, Major Sorensen. What can I do for you?"

"Thanks." The agent's tone crackled. He low-



ered his bulk into a chair and let his gaze drill Thornberg. "I've come about the Sam Hall case."

"Oh, the rebel?" Thornberg's flesh prickled. He could barely meet those eyes.

"How do you know he's a rebel?" Sorensen demanded. "That's never been stated officially."

"Why—I assumed—bank raid—attacks on personnel in your service—"

Sorensen slightly inclined his cropped head. When he spoke again, he sounded relaxed, almost casual. "Tell me, Major Thornberg, have you followed the Hall developments in detail?"

Thornberg hesitated. He was not supposed to do so unless ordered; he only kept the machine running. He remembered a principle from reading and, yes, furtively cynical conversation. "When suspected of a major sin, admit minor ones frankly. That may satisfy them."

"As a matter of fact, I have," he said. "I know it's against regs, but I was interested and—well, I couldn't see any harm in it. I've not discussed it with anybody, of course."

"No matter." Sorensen waved a muscular hand. "If you hadn't, I'd have ordered you to. I want your opinion on this."

"Why—I'm not a detective—"

"You know more about Records, though, than any other person. I'll be frank with you—under the rose, naturally." Sorensen seemed almost friendly now. Was it a trick to put his prey off guard? "You see, there are some puzzling features about this case."

Thornberg kept silent. He wondered if Sorensen could hear the thudding of his heart.

"Sam Hall is a shadow," said the agent. "The



most careful checkups eliminate any chance of his being identical with anyone else of that name. In fact, we've learned that the name occurs in a violent old drinking song. Is this coincidence, or did the song suggest crime to Sam Hall, or did he by some incredible process get that alias into his record instead of his real name? Whatever the answer there, we know that he's ostensibly without military training, yet he's pulled off some beautiful pieces of precision attack. His IQ is only 110, but he evades our traps. He has no politics, yet he turns on Security without warning. We have not been able to find a single individual who remembers him—not one, and believe me, we have been thorough. Oh, there are a few subconscious memories which might be of him, but probably aren't; and so aggressive a personality should be remembered consciously. No undergrounder or foreign operative we've caught had any knowledge of him, which defies probability. The whole business seems impossible."

Thornberg licked his lips. Sorensen, the hunter of men, must know he was frightened; but would he assume that to be the normal nervousness of a man in the presence of a Security officer?

Sorensen's face broke into a hard smile. "As Sherlock Holmes remarked," he said, "when you have eliminated every other hypothesis, then the one which remains, however improbable, must be right."

Despite himself, Thornberg was jolted. Sorensen hadn't struck him as a reader.

"Well," he asked slowly, "what is your remaining hypothesis?"

His visitor watched him for a long time, it



seemed forever, before replying. "The underground is more powerful and widespread than people realize. They've had seventy years to prepare, and many good brains in their ranks. They carry on scientific research of their own. It's top secret, but we know they have perfected a type of weapon we cannot duplicate yet. It seems to be a handgun throwing bolts of energy—a blaster, you might call it—of immense power. Sooner or later they're going to wage open war against the government.

"Now, could they have done something comparable in psychology? Could they have found a way to erase or cover up memories selectively, even on the cellular level? Could they know how to fool a personality tester, how to disguise the mind itself? If so, we may have any number of Sam Halls in our midst, undetectable until the moment comes for them to strike."

Thornberg felt almost boneless. He couldn't help gasping his relief, and hoped Sorensen would take it for a sign of alarm.

"The possibility is frightening, no?" The blond man laughed metallically. "You can imagine what is being felt in high official circles. We've put all the psychological researchers we could get to work on the problem—bah! Fools! They go by the book; they're afraid to be original even when the state tells them to.

"This may just be a wild fancy, of course. I hope it is. But we have to know. That's why I approached you personally, instead of sending the usual requisition. I want you to make a search of the records—everything pertaining to the subject, every man, every discovery, every hypothesis.

You have a broad technical background and, from your psychorecord, an unusual amount of creative imagination. I want you to do what you can to correlate your data. Co-opt whoever you need. Submit to my office a report on the possibility—or should I say probability—of this notion, and if you find any likelihood of its being true, sketch out a research program which will enable us to duplicate the results and counteract them.”

Thornberg fumbled for words. “I’ll try,” he said lamely. “I’ll do my best.”

“Good. It’s for the state.”

Sorensen had finished his official business, but he didn’t go at once. “Rebel propaganda is subtle stuff,” he said quietly, after a pause. “It’s dangerous because it uses our own slogans, with a twisted meaning. Liberty, equality, justice, peace. Too many people can’t appreciate that times have changed and the meanings of words have necessarily changed likewise.”

“I suppose not,” said Thornberg. He added the lie: “I never thought much about that kind of question.”

“You should,” said Sorensen. “Study your history. When we lost World War III we had to militarize to win World War IV, and after that mount guard on the whole human race. The people demanded it at the time.”

The people, thought Thornberg, never appreciated freedom till they’d lost it. They were always willing to sell their birthright. Or was it merely that, being untrained in thinking, they couldn’t see through demagoguery, couldn’t visualize the ultimate consequences of their wishes?



He was vaguely shocked at the thought; wasn't he able to control his mind any longer?

"The rebels," said Sorensen, "claim that conditions have changed, that militarization is no longer necessary—if it ever was—and that America would be safe in a union of free countries. Devilishly clever propaganda, Major Thornberg. Watch out for it."

He got up and took his leave. Thornberg sat for a long time staring at the door. Sorensen's last words had been odd, to say the least. Were they a hint—or a bait?

The next day Matilda received a news item which was carefully edited for the public channels. An insurrectionist force had landed aircraft in the stockade of Camp Forbes, in Utah, gunned down the guards, and taken away the prisoners. The institution's doctor had been spared, and related that the leader of the raid, a stocky man in a mask, had said to him: "Tell your friends I'll call again. My name is Sam Hall."

Space Guard ship blown up on Mesa Verde Field. On a fragment of metal someone has scrawled: "Compliments of Sam Hall."

Squad of Security Police, raiding a suspected underground hideout in Philadelphia, cut down by tommy-gun fire. Voice from a hidden bullhorn cries: "My name, it is Sam Hall!"

Matthew Williamson, chemist in Seattle, suspected of subversive connections, is gone when the arresting officers break into his home. A note left on his desk says: "Off to visit Sam Hall. Back for liberation. M.W."

Defense plant producing important robomb components near Miami is sabotaged by a planted bomb, after a phone warning gives the workers time to evacuate. The caller, who leaves the visio circuit off, styles himself Sam Hall. Various similar places get similar warnings. These are fakes, but each costs a day's valuable work in the alarm and the search.

Scribbled on walls from New York to San Diego, from Duluth to El Paso, Sam Hall, Sam Hall, Sam Hall.

Obviously, thought Thornberg, the underground had seized on the invisible and invincible man of legend and turned him to their own purposes. Reports of him poured in from all over the country, hundreds every day—Sam Hall seen here, Sam Hall seen there. Ninety-nine percent could be dismissed as hoaxes, hallucinations, mistakes; it was another national craze, fruit of a jittery time, like the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century witch hunts or the twentieth-century flying saucers. But Security and civilian police had to check on every one.

Thornberg planted a number of them himself. Mostly, though, he was busy on his assignment. He could understand what it meant to the government. Life in the garrison state was inevitably founded on fear and mistrust, every man's eye on his neighbor; but at least psychotyping and hypnoquizzing had given a degree of surety. Now, that staff knocked out from under them—

His preliminary studies indicated that an invention such as Sorensen had hypothesized, while not impossible, was too far beyond the



scope of contemporary science for the rebels to have perfected. Such research carried on nowadays would, from the standpoint of practicality if not of knowledge, be a waste of time and trained men.

He spent a good many sleepless hours and a month's cigarette ration before he could decide what to do. All right, he'd aided insurrection in a small way, and he shouldn't boggle at the next step. Still—nevertheless—did he want to?

Jack—his son had a career lined out for himself. He loved the big deeps beyond the sky as he would love a woman. If things changed, what then of Jack's career?

Well, what was it now? Stuck on a dreary planet as guardsman and executioner of homesick starvelings poisoned by radioactivity; never even seeing the sun. Come the day, Jack could surely wangle a berth on a real spacer. They'd need bold men to explore beyond Saturn. Jack was too honest to make a good rebel, but Thornberg felt that after the initial shock he would welcome a new government.

But treason! Oaths!

*When in the course of human events . . .*

It was a small thing that decided Thornberg. He passed a shop downtown and noticed a group of the Youth Guard smashing the windows and spattering yellow paint over the goods, O Moses, Jesus, Mendelssohn, Hertz and Einstein! Once he had chosen his path, a curious serenity possessed him. He stole a vial of prussic acid from a chemist friend and carried it in his pocket; and as for Jack, the boy would have to take his chances, too.

The work was demanding and dangerous. He



had to alter recorded facts which were available elsewhere, in books and journals and the minds of men. Nothing could be done about basic theory. But quantitative results could be juggled a little to set the overall picture subtly askew. He would co-opt carefully chosen experts, men whose psychotypes indicated they would take the easy course of relying on Matilda instead of checking original sources. And the correlation and integration of innumerable data, the empirical equations and extrapolations thereof, could be tampered with.

He turned his regular job over to Rodney and devoted himself entirely to the new one. He grew thin and testy; when Sorensen called, trying to hurry him, he snapped back: "Do you want speed or quality?" and wasn't too surprised at himself afterward. He got little sleep, but his mind seemed unnaturally clear.

Winter faded into spring while Thornberg and his experts labored and while the nation shook, psychically and physically, under the growing violence of Sam Hall. The report Thornberg submitted in May was so voluminous and detailed that he didn't think the government researchers would bother referring to any other source. Its conclusion: Yes, given a brilliant man applying Belloni matrices to cybernetic formulas and using some unknown kind of colloidal probe, a psychological masking technique was plausible.

The government yanked every man it could find into research. Thornberg knew it was only a matter of time before they realized they had been had. How much time, he couldn't say. But when they were sure . . .



Now up the rope I go, up I go.  
Now up the rope I go, up I go.  
And the bastards down below,  
They say, "Sam, we told you so."  
They say, "Sam, we told you so," God damn  
their eyes.

REBELS ATTACK  
SPACESHIPS LAND UNDER COVER OF  
RAINSTORM, SEIZE POINTS NEAR  
N. DETROIT  
FLAME WEAPONS USED AGAINST ARMY  
BY REBELS

"The infamous legions of the traitors have taken ground throughout the nation, but already our gallant forces have hurled them back. They have come out in early summer like toadstools, and will wither as fast—WHEEEEEEE-OOOOOOO!"  
Silence.

"All citizens will keep calm, remain loyal to their country, and stay at their usual tasks, until otherwise ordered. Civilians will report to their local defense officers. Military reservists will report immediately for active duty."

"Hello, Hawaii! Are you there? Come in, Hawaii! Calling Hawaii!"

"CQ, Mars GHQ calling . . . bzzzz, wheeee . . . seized Syrtis Major Colony and . . . whoooo . . . help needed . . ."

The lunar rocket bases are assaulted and carried. The commander blows them up rather than surrender. A pinpoint flash on the moon's face, a new crater; what will they name it?

"So they've got Seattle, have they? Send a

robomb flight. Scrub the place off the map. . . . Citizens? To hell with citizens! This was war!"

"... in New York. Secretly drilled rebels emerged from the notorious Crater district and stormed . . ."

"... assassins were shot down. The new President has already been sworn in and . . ."

### BRITAIN, CANADA, AUSTRALIA REFUSE ASSISTANCE TO GOV'T

"... no, sir. The bombs reached Seattle all right. But they were stopped before they hit—some kind of energy gun. . . ."

"COMECO to army commanders in Florida and Georgia: Enemy action has made Florida and the Keys temporarily untenable. Your units will withdraw as follows . . ."

"Today a rebel force engaging a military convoy in Donner Pass was annihilated by a well-placed tactical atomic bomb. Though our own men suffered losses on this account . . ."

"COMWECO to army commanders in California: the mutiny of units stationed around San Francisco poses a grave problem. . . ."

### SP RAID REBEL HIDEOUT, BAG FIVE OFFICERS

"Okay, so the enemy is about to capture Boston. We can't issue weapons to the citizens. They might turn them on us!"

### SPACE GUARD UNITS EXPECTED FROM VENUS



*Jack, Jack, Jack!*

It was strange, living in the midst of a war. Thornberg had never thought it would be like this. Drawn faces, furtive looks, chaos in the telecast news and the irregularly arriving papers, blackouts, civil defense drills, shortages, occasional panic when a rebel jet whistled overhead—but nothing else. No gunfire, no bombs, no more than the unreal combats you heard about. The only local casualty lists were due to Security; people kept disappearing, and nobody spoke about them.

But then, why should the enemy bother with this unimportant mountain town? The self-styled Libertarian Army was grabbing key points of manufacture, transportation, communication, was engaging in pitched battles, sabotaging buildings and machines, assassinating officials. By its very purpose, it couldn't wage total war, couldn't annihilate the folk it wanted to free—an attitude historically rare among revolutionaries, Thornberg knew. Rumor said the defenders were less finicky.

Most citizens were passive. They always are. Probably no more than one-fourth of the population was ever in earshot of an engagement. City dwellers might see fire in the sky, hear crump and whistle and crash of artillery, scramble aside from soldiers and armored vehicles, cower in shelters when rockets arced overhead; but the action was outside of town. If matters came to street fighting, the rebels never pushed far in. They would either lay siege or they would rely on agents inside the town. Then a citizen might hear the crack of rifles



and grenades, rattle of machine guns, sizzle of lasers, and see corpses. But the end was either a return of military government or the rebels marching in and setting up their own provisional councils. (They rarely met cheers and flowers. Nobody knew how the war would end. But they heard words whispered, and usually got good service.) As nearly as possible, the average American continued his average life.

Thornberg stayed on his personal rails. Matilda, the information nexus, was in such demand that users queued for their shared time. If the rebels ever learned where she was—

Or did they know?

He got few opportunities to conduct his private sabotages, but on that account planned each of them extra carefully. The Sam Hall reports were almost standardized in his mind—Sam Hall here, Sam Hall there, pulling off this or that incredible stunt. But what did one superman count for in these gigantic days? He needed something more.

Television and newspapers jubilantly announced that Venus had finally been contacted. Luna and Mars had fallen, but the Guard units on Venus had quickly smashed a few feeble uprisings. Mere survival there demanded quantities of powerful, sophisticated equipment, readily adaptable to military purposes. The troops would be returning at once, fully armed. Given present planetary configurations, the highest boost could not deliver them on Earth for a good six weeks. But then they might prove a decisive reinforcement.

“Looks like you may see your boy soon, chief,” Rodney remarked.



"Yes," said Thornberg, "I may."

"Tough fighting." Rodney shook his head. "I'd sure as hell hate to be in it."

*If Jack is killed by a rebel gun, when I have aided the rebels' cause . . .*

Sam Hall, reflected Thornberg, had lived a hard life, all violence and enmity and suspicion. Even his wife hadn't trusted him.

*. . . And my Nellie dressed in blue,  
Says, "Your trifling days are through.  
Now I know that you'll be true, God damn  
your eyes."*

Poor Sam Hall. No wonder he had killed a man.  
Suspicion!

Thornberg stood for a moment while a tingle went through him. The police state was founded on suspicion. Nobody could trust anybody else. And with the new fear of psychomasking, and research on that project suspended during the crisis—

*Steady, boy, steady. Can't rush into action.  
Have to plan very carefully.*

Thornberg punched for the dossiers of key men in the administration, in the military, in Security. He did this in the presence of two assistants, for he thought that his own frequent sessions alone in the coordination booth were beginning to look funny.

"Top secret," he warned them, pleased with his cool manner. He was becoming a regular Machiavelli. "You'll be skinned alive if you mention it to anyone."

Rodney gave him a shrewd glance. "So they're

not even sure of their top men now, are they?" he murmured.

"I've been told to make some checks," snapped Thornberg. "That's all you need to know."

He studied the files for many hours before coming to a decision. Secret observations were, of course, made of everyone from time to time. A cross-check with Matilda showed that the cop who filed the last report on Lindahl had been killed the next day in a spontaneous and abortive uprising. The report was innocuous: Lindahl had stayed at home, studying various papers; he had been alone in the house except for a bodyguard in another room who had not seen him. And Lindahl was Undersecretary of Defense.

Thornberg changed the record. A masked man—stocky, black-haired—had come in and talked for three hours with Lindahl. They had spoken low, so that the cop's ears, outside the window, couldn't catch what was said. After the visitor left, Lindahl had retired. The cop went back in great excitement, made out his report, and gave it to the signalman, who had sent it on to Matilda.

Tough on the signalman, thought Thornberg. They'll want to know why he didn't tell this to his chief in New Washington, if the observer was killed before doing so. He'll deny every such report, and they'll hypnoquiz him—but they don't trust that method anymore!

His sympathy quickly faded. What counted was having the war over before Jack got home. He refilled the altered spool and did a little backtracking, shifting the last report of Sam Hall from Salt Lake City to Atlanta. More plausible.



Then, as opportunity permitted, he worked on real men's records.

He must wait two haggard days before the next order came from Security for a check on Sam Hall. The scanners trod out their intricate measure, transistors awoke, in due course a cog turned. LINDAHL unrolled before the microprinter. Cross references ramified in all directions. Thornberg attached a query to the preliminary report: this looked interesting; did his superiors want more information?

They did!

Next day the telecast announced a shake-up in the Department of Defense. Nobody heard more about Lindahl.

And I, Thornberg reflected, have grabbed a very large tiger by the tail. Now they'll have to check everybody. How does a solitary man keep ahead of the Security Police?

Lindahl is a traitor. How did his chief ever let him get such a sensitive position? Secretary Hoheimer was a personal friend of Lindahl, too. Have Records check Hoheimer.

What's this? Hoheimer himself! Five years ago, yes, but even so—the dossier shows he lived in an apartment unit where Sam Hall was janitor! Grab Hoheimer! Who'll take his place? General Haliburton? That stupid old bastard? Well, at least his nose is clean. Can't trust those slick characters.

Hoheimer has a brother in Security, general's rank, good detection record. A blind? Who knows? Slap the brother in jail, at least for the duration. Better check his staff. . . . Central Records shows that his chief field agent, Jones, has



five days unaccounted for a year ago; he claimed Security secrecy at the time, but a double cross-check shows it wasn't true. Shoot Jones! He has a nephew in the army, a captain. Pull that unit out of the firing line till we can study it man by man! We've had too many mutinies already.

Lindahl was also a close friend of Benson, in charge of the Tennessee Atomic Ordnance Works. Haul Benson in! Check every man connected with him! No trusting those scientists; they're always blabbing secrets.

The first Hoheimer's son is an industrialist, owns a petroleum-synthesis plant in Texas. Nab him! His wife is a sister of Leslie, head of the War Production Coordination Board. Get Leslie, too. Sure, he's doing a good job, but he may be sending information to the enemy. Or he may just be waiting for the signal to sabotage the whole works. We can't trust anybody, I tell you!

What's this? Records relays an Intelligence report that the mayor of Tampa was in cahoots with the rebels. It's marked "Unreliable, Rumor"—but Tampa did surrender without a fight. The mayor's business partner is Gale, who has a cousin in the army, commanding a robomb base in New Mexico. Check both the Gales, Records. . . . So the cousin was absent four days without filing his whereabouts, was he? Military privilege or not, arrest him and find out where he was!

● Attention, Records, attention, Records, urgent. Brigadier John Harmsworth Gale, etc., etc., refused to divulge information required by Security Officers, claiming to have been at his base all the time. Can this be an error on your part?

● Records to Security Central, ref: etc., etc. No



possibility of error exists except in information received.

● to Records, ref: etc., etc. Gale's story corroborated by three of his officers.

Put that whole damned base under arrest! Re-check those reports! Who sent them in, anyway?

● to Records, ref: etc., etc. On attempt to arrest entire personnel, Robomb Base 37-J fired on Security detachment and repulsed it. At last reports Gale was calling for rebel forces fifty miles off to assist him. Details will follow for the files as soon as possible.

So Gale was a traitor. Or was he driven by fear? Have Records find out who filed that information about him in the first place.

*We can't trust anybody!*

Thornberg was not much surprised when his door was kicked open and the Security squad entered. He had been expecting it for days, maybe weeks. A solitary man can't keep ahead of the game forever. No doubt accumulated inconsistencies had finally drawn suspicion his way; or, ironically, the chains of accusation he forged had by chance led to him; perhaps somebody here, like Rodney, had decided something was amiss and lodged a tip.

Were that last the case, he laid no blame. The tragedy of civil war was that it turned brother against brother. Millions of decent people were with the government because they had pledged themselves to be, or simply because they didn't believe in the alternative. Mostly, Thornberg felt tired.

He looked down the barrel of a revolver and up

to the eyes of the blackcoat behind. They were equally empty of feeling. "I assume I'm under arrest?" he said tonelessly.

"On your feet," the leader snapped.

June could not hold back a whimper of pain. The man who held her was twisting her arm behind her back, obviously enjoying himself. "Don't do that," Thornberg said. "She's innocent. Had no idea what I was carrying out."

"On your feet, I told you." The leader thrust his gun closer.

"I suggest you leave me alone, too." Thornberg lifted his right hand, to show a ball he had taken from his desk when the squad arrived. "Do you see this? A thing I made against contingencies. Not a bomb per se—but a radio trigger. If my fingers relax, the rubber will expand and close a circuit. I believe such a device is called a dead-man switch."

The squad stiffened. Thornberg heard an oath. "Release the lady," he said.

"You surrender first!" said June's captor. He wrenched. She screamed.

"No," Thornberg said. "June, dear, I'm sorry. But have no fears. You see, I expected this visit, and made my preparations. The radio signaler won't touch off anything as melodramatic as a bomb. No, instead it will close a relay which will activate a certain program in Matilda—the Records computer, you know, the data machine. Every spool will be wiped. The government will have not a record left. Myself, I am prepared to die. But if you men let me complete that circuit, I imagine you'll wish there had been a bomb. Now do let go of the lady."



The blackcoat did, as if she had suddenly turned incandescent. She slumped sobbing to the floor.

"A bluff!" the leader shouted. Sweat made his face shiny.

"Do you wish to call it?" Thornberg made a smile. "By all means."

"You traitor—"

"I prefer 'patriot,' if you please. But be the semantics as they may, you must admit I was effective. The government has been turned end for end and upside-down. The army is breaking apart, officers deserting right and left for fear they'll be arrested next, or defecting, or leading mutinies. Security is chasing its own tail around half a continent. Far more administrators are being murdered by their colleagues than the underground could possibly assassinate. The Libertarians take city after city without resistance. My guess is that they will occupy New Washington inside another week."

"Your doing!" Finger quivered on trigger.

"Oh, no. Spare my blushes. But I did make a contribution of some significance, yes. Unless you say Sam Hall did, which is fine by me."

"What . . . will . . . you do now?"

"That depends on you, my friend. Whether I am killed or only rendered unconscious, Matilda dies. You could have the technicians check out whether I'm telling the truth, and if I am, you could have them yank that program. However, at the first sign of any such move on your part, I will naturally let the ball go. Look in my mouth." He opened it briefly. "Yes, the conventional glass vial of prussic acid. I apologize for the cliché, but

you will understand that I have no wish to share the fate that you people bring on yourselves."

Bafflement wrestled rage in the countenances before Thornberg. They weren't used to thinking, those men.

"Of course," he went on, "you have an alternative. At last reports, a Liberation unit was established less than two hundred kilometers from here. We could call and ask them to send a force, explaining the importance of this place. That would be to your advantage, too. There is going to be a day of reckoning with you blackcoats. My influence could help you personally, however little you deserve to get off the hook."

They stared at each other. After a very long while, wherein the only sounds were June's diminishing sobs, unevenly drawn breaths among the police, and Thornberg's pulse rapid in his ears, the leader spat, "No! You lie!" He aimed his gun.

The man behind him drew and shot him in the head.

The result was ugly to see. As soon as he knew he was fully in charge, Thornberg did his best to comfort June.

"As a matter of fact," he told Sorensen, "I was bluffing. That was just a ball; the poison alone was real. Not that it made much difference at that stage, except to me."

"We'll need Matilda for a while yet," said Sorensen. "Want to stay on?"

"Sure, provided I can take a vacation when my son comes home."

"That shouldn't be long now. You'll be glad to



hear we've finally contacted the Venus units of the Space Guard, on their way back. The commander agreed to stay out of fighting, on the grounds that his service's obligation is to the legitimate government and we'll need an election to determine what that is. Your boy will be safe."

Thornberg could find no words of response. Instead he remarked with hard-held casualness, "You know, I'm surprised to learn you were an undergrounder."

"We got a few into Security, who wangled things so they gave each other clearances and loyalty checks." Sorensen grimaced. "That was the only part of it I enjoyed, though, till quite lately."

He leaned back in his chair which creaked under his weight. In civilian clothes which nothing but an armband made into the uniform of a Libertarian officer, he did seem an altogether different man. Where his bulk had formerly crowded Thornberg's office, today his vitality irradiated it.

"Then Sam Hall came along," he said. "They had their suspicions at first in Security. My bosses were evil but not stupid. Well, I got myself assigned to the job of checking you out. Right away I guessed you harbored disruptive thoughts, so I gave you a clean bill of health. Afterward I cooked up that fantasy of the psychological mask and got several high-ranking men worried. When you followed my lead, I was sure you were on our side. Consequently, though the Libertarian command knew all along where Matilda was, of course they left her alone!"

"You must have joined them in person very recently."

"Yeah, the witch hunt you started inside of Security was getting too close to me. Well worth a risk, though, to see those cockroaches busily stepping on each other."

Thornberg sat quiet awhile, then leaned over his desk. "I haven't enlisted under your banner yet," he said gravely. "I had to assume the Libertarian words about freedom where not mere rhetoric. But . . . you mentioned Matilda. You want me to continue in my work here. What are your plans for her?"

Sorensen turned equally serious. "I was waiting for you to ask that, Thorny. Look. Besides needing her to help us find some people we want rather badly, we are responsible for the sheer physical survival of the country. I'd feel easier too if we could take her apart this minute. But—"

"Yes?"

"But we've got to transcribe a lot of information from strictly practical facts. Then we wipe everything else and ceremoniously dynamite this building. You're invited, no, urgently asked to sit on the board that decides the details—in other words, we want you to help work yourself out of a job."

"Thank you," Thornberg whispered.

After a moment, in a sudden tide of happiness, he chuckled. "And that will be the end of Sam Hall," he said. "He'll go to whatever Valhalla there is for the great characters of fiction. I can see him squabbling with Sherlock Holmes and shocking the hell out of King Arthur and striking up a beautiful friendship with Long John Silver. Do



you know how the ballad ends?" He sang softly: "Now up in heaven I dwell, in heaven I dwell. . . ."

Unfortunately, the conclusion is rugged. Sam Hall never was satisfied.





## *Afterword* *to*

### **“Sam Hall”**

POUL ANDERSON appeared more times in the fifties *Astounding* than any other writer, an accomplishment the more signatory because Anderson, unlike most of Campbell's contributors, did his own work and not Campbell's. Where Eric Frank Russell and Raymond F. Jones had pocket careers devoted to the fictionalizing of Campbellian whimsy (perhaps to their long-term detriment—both had more talent than other writers with whom the modern audience is more familiar), Anderson went his individual way through at least five serialized novels and close to a hundred short stories.

Of even more interest is that whereas Eric Frank Russell (who died in February 1978, nineteen years after his last publication) and Raymond Jones are now completely out of print in science fiction, Anderson is completely in. A massive Berkley reissue in 1978 put back almost all of his titles that had not been kept alive by other pub-

lishers. Arguably, Poul Anderson is the best of the technologically oriented, scientifically rigorous science fiction writers, the perpetrators of what is called, for good or evil, "hard" science fiction. As I said in another essay on Anderson, if you look at science fiction as necessarily being one kind of thing, then probably Silverberg, Disch, and Ballard are our best; but if you look at it as being another—and the view is just as defensible—Anderson is on top. Only James H. Schmitz at his best was near him, and Schmitz, an honorable writer, has had nothing like Poul Anderson's span in science fiction: Anderson's first published story was in 1947, his first novel (*Brain Wave*) in 1954, and he has averaged a novel a year since then atop his hundreds of magazine appearances. "Sam Hall" is a good, earnest example of the twenty-five-year-old Anderson's attempt to put into science fiction at least as much as he had taken out in tradition and influence. It was, along with "Un-Man," published a few months earlier that year, his most ambitious and extended work to date.

By 1953 John Campbell envisioned himself to be in a death struggle for circulation and influence in the category, greatly threatened by Horace Gold's *Galaxy*. (To Campbell, *Fantasy & Science Fiction* was always a literateur's publication.) His art director had adopted *Galaxy's* cover format, Campbell was trying to build up a new generation of writers to replace many who had gone over to H. L. Gold, and his word-rates, raised in 1951, were raised again based upon readers' polls so that a well-received novel or novelette could earn the writer four or five cents a word. These rates



were hardly contemptible—the present-day *Analog/Astounding* pays barely a cent a word more and has a cover price three and a half times higher than the 1953 *Astounding* which sold in a world of eighty-cent-a-pound steaks, \$1,500 new Chevrolets, and \$5.50 orchestra tickets for *The Kind and I*. Campbell, whose editorial reign probably should have ended in 1950 (his association with L. Ron Hubbard's dianetics probably came from the fact that he was at least its co-creator, but unlike Hubbard was unable to cut loose of his position, his prerogatives, and his science fictional cachet) and whose continuing tenure right up until his death on July 11, 1971 showed increasing hostility and resentment, was still an important influence at this time and was responsible for much good work which H. L. Gold could not have understood or accommodated . . . "Sam Hall" is probably such a story.

B. N. M.





# *Disappearing Act*

Alfred Bester

THIS ONE wasn't the last war or a war to end war. They called it the War for the American Dream. General Carpenter struck that note and sounded it constantly.

There are fighting generals (vital to an army), political generals (vital to an administration), and public relations generals (vital to a war). General Carpenter was a master of public relations. Forthright and Four-Square, he had ideals as high and as understandable as the mottoes on money. In the mind of America he was the army, the administration, the nation's shield and sword and stout right arm. His ideal was the American Dream.

"We are not fighting for money, for power, or for world domination," General Carpenter announced at the Press Association dinner.

"We are fighting solely for the American Dream," he said to the 137th Congress.

"Our aim is not aggression or the reduction of

nations to slavery," he said at the West Point Annual Officer's Dinner.

"We are fighting for the meaning of civilization," he told the San Francisco Pioneers' Club.

"We are struggling for the ideal of civilization; for culture, for poetry, for the Only Things Worth Preserving," he said at the Chicago Wheat Pit Festival.

"This is a war for survival," he said. "We are not fighting for ourselves, but for our dreams; for the Better Things in Life which must not disappear from the face of the earth."

America fought. General Carpenter asked for one hundred million men. The army was given one hundred million men. General Carpenter asked for ten thousand H-Bombs. Ten thousand H-Bombs were delivered and dropped. The enemy also dropped ten thousand H-Bombs and destroyed most of America's cities.

"We must dig in against the hordes of barbarism," General Carpenter said. "Give me a thousand engineers."

One thousand engineers were forthcoming, and a hundred cities were dug and hollowed out beneath the rubble.

"Give me five hundred sanitation experts, three hundred traffic managers, two hundred air-conditioning experts, one hundred city managers, one thousand communication chiefs, seven hundred personnel experts . . ."

The list of General Carpenter's demand for technical experts was endless. America did not know how to supply them.

"We must become a nation of experts," General Carpenter informed the National Association of



American Universities. "Every man and woman must be a specific tool for a specific job, hardened and sharpened by your training and education to win the fight for the American Dream."

"Our Dream," General Carpenter said at the Wall Street Bond Drive Breakfast, "is at one with the gentle Greeks of Athens, with the noble Romans of . . . er . . . Rome. It is a dream of the Better Things in Life. Of music and art and poetry and culture. Money is only a weapon to be used in the fight for this dream. Ambition is only a ladder to climb to this dream. Ability is only a tool to shape this dream."

Wall Street applauded. General Carpenter asked for one hundred and fifty billion dollars, fifteen hundred ambitious dollar-a-year men, three thousand able experts in mineralogy, petrology, mass production, chemical warfare and air-traffic time study. They were delivered. The country was in high gear. General Carpenter had only to press a button and an expert would be delivered.

In March of A.D. 2112 the war came to a climax and the American Dream was resolved, not on any one of the seven fronts where millions of men were locked in bitter combat, not in any of the staff headquarters or any of the capitals of the warring nations, not in any of the production centers spewing forth arms and supplies, but in Ward T of the United States Army Hospital buried three hundred feet below what had once been St. Albans, New York.

Ward T was something of a mystery at St. Albans. Like any army hospital, St. Albans was organized with specific wards reserved for specific



injuries. All right-arm amputees were gathered in one ward, all left-arm amputees in another. Radiation burns, head injuries, eviscerations, secondary gamma poisonings and so on were each assigned their specific location in the hospital organization. The Army Medical Corps had designated nineteen classes of combat injury which included every possible kind of damage to brain and tissue. These used up letters A to S. What, then, was in Ward T?

No one knew. The doors were double-locked. No visitors were permitted to enter. No patients were permitted to leave. Physicians were seen to arrive and depart. Their perplexed expressions stimulated the wildest speculations but revealed nothing. The nurses who ministered to Ward T were questioned eagerly but they were close-mouthed.

There were dribs and drabs of information, unsatisfying and self-contradictory. A charwoman asserted that she had been in to clean up and there had been no one in the ward. Absolutely no one. Just two dozen beds and nothing else. Had the beds been slept in? Yes. They were rumpled, some of them. Were there signs of the ward being in use? Oh yes. Personal things on the tables and so on. But dusty, kind of. Like they hadn't been used in a long time.

Public opinion decided it was a ghost ward. For spooks only.

But a night orderly reported passing the locked ward and hearing singing from within. What kind of singing? Foreign language, like. What language? The orderly couldn't say. Some of the



words sounded like . . . well, like: Cow dee on us eager tour . . .

Public opinion started to run a fever and decided it was an alien ward. For spies only.

St. Albans enlisted the help of the kitchen staff and checked the food trays. Twenty-four trays went in to Ward T three times a day. Twenty-four came out. Sometimes the returning trays were emptied. Most times they were untouched.

Public opinion built up pressure and decided that Ward T was a racket. It was an informal club for goldbricks and staff grafters who caroused within. Cow dee on us eager tour indeed!

For gossip, a hospital can put a small-town sewing circle to shame with ease, but sick people are easily goaded into passion by trivia. It took just three months for idle speculation to turn into downright fury. In January, 2112, St. Albans was a sound, well-run hospital. By March, 2112, St. Albans was in a ferment, and the psychological unrest found its way into the official records. The percentage of recoveries fell off. Malingerers set in. Petty infractions increased. Mutinies flared.

There was a staff shake-up. It did no good. Ward T was inciting the patients to riot. There was another shake-up, and another, and still the unrest fumed.

The news finally reached General Carpenter's desk through official channels.

"In our fight for the American Dream," he said, "we must not ignore those who have already given of themselves. Send me a Hospital Administration expert."

The expert was delivered. He could do nothing

to heal St. Albans. General Carpenter read the reports and broke him.

"Pity," said General Carpenter, "is the first ingredient of civilization. Send me a Surgeon General."

A Surgeon General was delivered. He could not break the fury of St. Albans and General Carpenter broke him. But by this time Ward T was being mentioned in the dispatches.

"Send me," General Carpenter said, "the expert in charge of Ward T."

St. Albans sent a doctor, Captain Edsel Dimmock. He was a stout young man, already bald, only three years out of medical school but with a fine record as an expert in psychotherapy. General Carpenter liked experts. He liked Dimmock. Dimmock adored the general as the spokesman for a culture which he had been too specially trained to seek up to now, but which he hoped to enjoy after the war was won.

"Now look here, Dimmock," General Carpenter began. "We're all of us tools, today—sharpened and hardened to do a specific job. You know our motto: A job for everyone and everyone on the job. Somebody's not on the job at Ward T and we've got to kick him out. Now, in the first place what the hell is Ward T?"

Dimmock stuttered and fumbled. Finally he explained that it was a special ward set up for special combat cases. Shock cases.

"Then you do have patients in the ward?"

"Yes, sir. Ten women and fourteen men."

Carpenter brandished a sheaf of reports. "Says here the St. Albans patients claim nobody's in Ward T."



Dimmock was shocked. That was untrue, he assured the general.

"All right, Dimmock. So you've got your twenty-four crocks in there. Their job's to get well. Your job's to cure them. What the hell's upsetting the hospital about that?"

"W-Well, sir. Perhaps it's because we keep them locked up."

"You keep Ward T locked?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"To keep the patients in, General Carpenter."

"Keep 'em in? What d'you mean? Are they trying to get out? They violent, or something?"

"No, sir. Not violent."

"Dimmock, I don't like your attitude. You're acting damned sneaky and evasive. And I'll tell you something else I don't like. That T classification. I checked with a Filing Expert from the Medical Corps and there is no T classification. What the hell are you up to at St. Albans?"

"W-Well, sir . . . We invented the T classification. It . . . They . . . They're rather special cases, sir. We don't know what to do about them or how to handle them. W-We've been trying to keep it quiet until we've worked out a *modus operandi*, but it's brand new, General Carpenter. Brand new!" Here the expert in Dimmock triumphed over discipline. "It's sensational. It'll make medical history, by God! It's the biggest damned thing ever."

"What is it, Dimmock? Be specific."

"Well, sir, they're shock cases. Blanked out. Almost catatonic. Very little respiration. Slow pulse. No response."

"I've seen thousands of shock cases like that," Carpenter grunted. "What's so unusual?"

"Yes, sir. So far it sounds like the standard Q or R classification. But here's something unusual. They don't eat and they don't sleep.

"Never?"

"Some of them never."

"Then why don't they die?"

"We don't know. The metabolism cycle's broken, but only on the anabolism side. Catabolism continues. In other words, sir, they're eliminating waste products but they're not taking anything in. They're eliminating fatigue poisons and rebuilding worn tissue, but without sleep. God knows how. It's fantastic."

"That why you've got them locked up? Mean to say . . . D'you suspect them of stealing food and cat naps somewhere else?"

"N-No, sir." Dimmock looked shamefaced. "I don't know how to tell you this, General Carpenter. I . . . We lock them up because of the real mystery. They . . . Well, they disappear."

"They what?"

"They disappear, sir. Vanish. Right before your eyes."

"The hell you say."

"I do say, sir. They'll be sitting on a bed or standing around. One minute you see them, the next minute you don't. Sometimes there's two dozen in Ward T. Other times none. They disappear and reappear without rhyme or reason. That's why we've got the ward locked, General Carpenter. In the entire history of combat and combat injury there's never been a case like this



before. We don't know how to handle it."

"Bring me three of those cases," General Carpenter said.

Nathan Riley ate french toast, eggs benedict; consumed two quarts of brown ale, smoked a John Drew, belched delicately and arose from the breakfast table. He nodded quietly to Gentleman Jim Corbett, who broke off his conversation with Diamond Jim Brady to intercept him on the way to the cashier's desk.

"Who do you like for the pennant this year, Nat?" Gentleman Jim inquired.

"The Dodgers," Nathan Riley answered.

"They've got no pitching."

"They've got Snider and Furillo and Campanella. They'll take the pennant this year, Jim. I'll bet they take it earlier than any team ever did. By September thirteenth. Make a note. See if I'm right."

"You're always right, Nat," Corbett said.

Riley smiled, paid his check, sauntered out into the street and caught a horsecar bound for Madison Square Garden. He got off at the corner of 50th and Eighth Avenue and walked upstairs to a handbook office over a radio repair shop. The bookie glanced at him, produced an envelope and counted out fifteen thousand dollars.

"Rocky Marciano by a TKO over Roland La Starza in the eleventh," he said. "How the hell do you call them so accurate, Nat?"

"That's the way I make a living," Riley smiled.

"Are you making book on the elections?"

"Eisenhower twelve to five. Stevenson—"

"Never mind Adlai." Riley placed twenty thousand dollars on the counter. "I'm backing Ike. Get this down for me."

He left the handbook office and went to his suite in the Waldorf where a tall, thin young man was waiting for him anxiously.

"Oh yes," Nathan Riley said. "You're Ford, aren't you? Harold Ford?"

"Henry Ford, Mr. Riley."

"And you need financing for that machine in your bicycle shop. What's it called?"

"I call it an Ipsimobile, Mr. Riley."

"Hmmm. Can't say I like that name. Why not call it an automobile?"

"That's a wonderful suggestion, Mr. Riley. I'll certainly take it."

"I like you, Henry. You're young, eager, adaptable. I believe in your future and I believe in your automobile. I'll invest two hundred thousand dollars in your company."

Riley wrote a check and ushered Henry Ford out. He glanced at his watch and suddenly felt impelled to go back and look around for a moment. He entered his bedroom, undressed, put on a gray shirt and gray slacks. Across the pocket of the shirt were large blue letters: U.S.A.H.

He locked the bedroom door and disappeared.

He reappeared in Ward T of the United States Army Hospital in St. Albans, standing alongside his bed which was one of twenty-four lining the walls of a long, light steel barracks. Before he could draw another breath, he was seized by three pairs of hands. Before he could struggle, he was shot by a pneumatic syringe and poleaxed by 1½ cc of sodium thiomorphate.



"We've got one," someone said.

"Hang around," someone else answered. "General Carpenter said he wanted three."

After Marcus Junius Brutus left her bed, Lela Machan clapped her hands. Her slave women entered the chamber and prepared her bath. She bathed, dressed, scented herself and breakfasted on Smyrna figs, Rose oranges and a flagon of Lachryma Christi. Then she smoked a cigarette and ordered her litter.

The gates of her house were crowded as usual by adoring hordes from the Twentieth Legion. Two centurions removed her chair-bearers from the poles of the litter and bore her on their stout shoulders. Lela Machan smiled. A young man in a sapphire-blue cloak thrust through the mob and ran toward her. A knife flashed in his hand. Lela braced herself to meet death bravely.

"Lady!" he cried. "Lady Lela!"

He slashed his left arm with the knife and let the crimson blood stain her robe.

"This blood of mine is the least I have to give you," he cried.

Lela touched his forehead gently.

"Silly boy," she murmured. "Why?"

"For love of you, my lady."

"You will be admitted tonight at nine," Lela whispered. He stared at her until she laughed. "I promise you. What is your name, pretty boy?"

"Ben Hur."

"Tonight at nine, Ben Hur."

The litter moved on. Outside the forum, Julius Caesar passed in hot argument with Marcus Antonius Antony. When he saw the litter he

motioned sharply to the centurions, who stopped at once. Caesar swept back the curtains and stared at Lela, who regarded him languidly. Caesar's face twitched.

"Why?" he asked hoarsely. "I have begged, pleaded, bribed, wept, and all without forgiveness. Why, Lela? Why?"

"Do you remember Boadicea?" Lela murmured.

"Boadicea? Queen of the Britons? Good God, Lela, what can she mean to our love? I did not love Boadicea. I merely defeated her in battle."

"And killed her, Caesar."

"She poisoned herself, Lela."

"She was my mother, Caesar!" Suddenly Lela pointed her finger at Caesar. "Murderer. You will be punished. Beware the Ides of March, Caesar!"

Caesar recoiled in horror. The mob of admirers that had gathered around Lela uttered a shout of approval. Amidst a rain of rose petals and violets she continued on her way across the Forum to the Temple of the Vestal Virgins where she abandoned her adoring suitors and entered the sacred temple.

Before the altar she genuflected, intoned a prayer, dropped a pinch of incense on the altar flame and disrobed. She examined her beautiful body reflected in a silver mirror, then experienced a momentary twinge of homesickness. She put on a gray blouse and a gray pair of slacks. Across the pocket of the blouse was lettered U.S.A.H.

She smiled once at the altar and disappeared.

She reappeared in Ward T of the United States Army Hospital where she was instantly felled by



1½ cc of sodium thiomorphate injected subcutaneously by a pneumatic syringe.

"That's two," somebody said.

"One more to go."

George Hanmer paused dramatically and stared around . . . at the opposition benches, at the Speaker on the woolsack, at the silver mace on a crimson cushion before the Speaker's chair. The entire House of Parliament, hypnotized by Hanmer's fiery oratory, waited breathlessly for him to continue.

"I can say no more," Hanmer said at last. His voice was choked with emotion. His face was blanched and grim. "I will fight for this bill at the beachheads. I will fight in the cities, the towns, the fields and the hamlets. I will fight for this bill to the death and, God willing, I will fight for it after death. Whether this be a challenge or a prayer, let the consciences of the right honorable gentlemen determine; but of one thing I am sure and determined: England must own the Suez Canal."

Hanmer sat down. The house exploded. Through the cheering and applause he made his way out into the division lobby where Gladstone, Canning and Peel stopped him to shake his hand. Lord Palmerston eyed him coldly, but Pam was shouldered aside by Disraeli who limped up, all enthusiasm, all admiration.

"We'll have a bite at Tattersall's," Dizzy said. "My car's waiting."

Lady Beaconsfield was in the Rolls Royce outside the Houses of Parliament. She pinned a prim-

rose on Dizzy's lapel and patted Hanmer's cheek affectionately.

"You've come a long way from the schoolboy who used to bully Dizzy, Georgie," she said.

Hanmer laughed. Dizzy sang: "Gaudeamus igitur . . ." and Hanmer chanted the ancient scholastic song until they reached Tattersall's. There Dizzy ordered Guinness and grilled bones while Hanmer went upstairs in the club to change.

For no reason at all he had the impulse to go back for a last look. Perhaps he hated to break with his past completely. He divested himself of his surtout, nankeen waistcoat, pepper-and-salt trousers, polished Hessians and undergarments. He put on a gray shirt and gray trousers and disappeared.

He reappeared in Ward T of the St. Albans hospital where he was rendered unconscious by 1½ cc of sodium thiomorphate.

"That's three," somebody said.

"Take 'em to Carpenter."

So there they sat in General Carpenter's office, PFC Nathan Riley, M/Sgt Lela Machan, and Corp/2 George Hanmer. They were in their hospital grays. They were torpid with sodium thiomorphate.

The office had been cleared and it blazed with blinding light. Present were experts from Espionage, Counter-Espionage, Security and Central Intelligence. When Captain Edsel Dimmock saw the steel-faced ruthless squad awaiting the patients and himself, he started. General Carpenter smiled grimly.



"Didn't occur to you that we mightn't buy your disappearance story, eh Dimmock?"

"S-Sir?"

"I'm an expert too, Dimmock. I'll spell it out for you. The war's going badly. Very badly. There've been intelligence leaks. The St. Albans mess might point to you."

"B-But they do disappear, sir. I—"

"My experts want to talk to you and your patients about this disappearance act, Dimmock. They'll start with you."

The experts worked over Dimmock with pre-conscious softeners, id releases and superego blocks. They tried every truth serum in the books and every form of physical and mental pressure. They brought Dimmock, squealing, to the breaking point three times, but there was nothing to break.

"Let him stew for now," Carpenter said. "Get on to the patients."

The experts appeared reluctant to apply pressure to the sick men and the woman.

"For God's sake, don't be squeamish," Carpenter raged. "We're fighting a war for civilization. We've got to protect our ideals no matter what the price. Get to it!"

The experts from Espionage, Counter-Espionage, Security and Central Intelligence got to it. Like three candles, PFC Nathan Riley, M/Sgt Lela Machan and Corp/2 George Hanmer snuffed out and disappeared. One moment they were seated in chairs surrounded by violence. The next moment they were not.

The experts gasped. General Carpenter did the handsome thing. He stalked to Dimmock. "Cap-

tain Dimmock, I apologize. Colonel Dimmock, you've been promoted for making an important discovery . . . only what the hell does it mean? We've got to check ourselves first."

Carpenter snapped up the intercom. "Get me a combat-shock expert and an alienist."

The two experts entered and were briefed. They examined the witnesses. They considered.

"You're all suffering from a mild case of shock," the combat-shock expert said. "War jitters."

"You mean we didn't see them disappear?"

The shock expert shook his head and glanced at the alienist who also shook his head.

"Mass illusion," the alienist said.

At that moment PFC Riley, M/Sgt Machan and Corp/2 Hanmer reappeared. One moment they were a mass illusion; the next, they were back sitting in their chairs surrounded by confusion.

"Dope 'em again, Dimmock," Carpenter cried. "Give 'em a gallon." He snapped up his intercom. "I want every expert we've got. Emergency meeting in my office at once."

Thirty-seven experts, hardened and sharpened tools all, inspected the unconscious shock cases and discussed them for three hours. Certain facts were obvious: This must be a new fantastic syndrome brought on by the new and fantastic horrors of the war. As combat technique develops, the response of victims of this technique must also take new roads. For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Agreed.

This new syndrome must involve some aspects of teleportation . . . the power of mind over space.



Evidently combat shock, while destroying certain known powers of the mind must develop other latent powers hitherto unknown. Agreed.

Obviously, the patients must only be able to return to the point of departure, otherwise they would not continue to return to Ward T nor would they have returned to General Carpenter's office. Agreed.

Obviously, the patients must be able to procure food and sleep wherever they go, since neither was required in Ward T. Agreed.

"One small point," Colonel Dimmock said. "They seem to be returning to Ward T less frequently. In the beginning they would come and go every day or so. Now most of them stay away for weeks and hardly ever return."

"Never mind that," Carpenter said. "Where do they go?"

"Do they teleport behind the enemy lines?" someone asked. "There's those intelligence leaks."

"I want Intelligence to check," Carpenter snapped. "Is the enemy having similar difficulties with, say, prisoners of war who appear and disappear from their POW camps? They might be some of ours from Ward T."

"They might simply be going home," Colonel Dimmock suggested.

"I want Security to check," Carpenter ordered. "Cover the home life and associations of every one of those twenty-four disappearers. Now . . . about our operations in Ward T. Colonel Dimmock has a plan."

"We'll set up six extra beds in Ward T," Edsel

Dimmock explained. "We'll send in six experts to live there and observe. Information must be picked up indirectly from the patients. They're catatonic and nonresponsive when conscious, and incapable of answering questions when drugged."

"Gentlemen," Carpenter summed it up. "This is the greatest potential weapon in the history of warfare. I don't have to tell you what it can mean to us to be able to teleport an entire army behind enemy lines. We can win the war for the American Dream in one day if we can win this secret hidden in those shattered minds. We must win!"

The experts hustled, Security checked, Intelligence probed. Six hardened and sharpened tools moved into Ward T in St. Albans Hospital and slowly got acquainted with the disappearing patients who appeared and departed less and less frequently. The tension increased.

Security was able to report that not one case of strange appearance had taken place in America in the past year. Intelligence reported that the enemy did not seem to be having similar difficulties with their own shock cases or with POWs.

Carpenter fretted. "This is all brand new. We've got no specialists to handle it. We've got to develop new tools." He snapped up his intercom. "Get me a college," he said.

They got him Yale.

"I want some experts in mind over matter. Develop them," Carpenter ordered. Yale at once introduced three graduate courses in Thaumaturgy, Extrasensory Perception and Telekinesis.

The first break came when one of the Ward T



experts requested the assistance of another expert. He wanted a Lapidary.

"What the hell for?" Carpenter wanted to know.

"He picked up a reference to a gemstone," Colonel Dimmock explained. "He can't relate it to anything in his experience. He's a personnel specialist."

"And he's not supposed to," Carpenter said approvingly. "A job for every man and every man on the job." He flipped up the intercom. "Get me a Lapidary."

An expert Lapidary was given leave of absence from the army arsenal and asked to identify a type of diamond called Jim Brady. He could not.

"We'll try it from another angle," Carpenter said. He snapped up his intercom. "Get me a Semanticist."

The Semanticist left his desk in the War Propaganda Department but could make nothing of the words Jim Brady. They were names to him. No more. He suggested a Genealogist.

A Genealogist was given one day's leave from his post with the Un-American Ancestors Committee but could make nothing of the name Brady beyond the fact that it had been a common name in America for five hundred years. He suggested an Archaeologist.

An Archaeologist was released from the Cartography Division of Invasion Command and instantly identified the name Diamond Jim Brady. It was a historic personage who had been famous in the city of Little Old New York some time between Governor Peter Stuyvesant and Governor Fiorello La Guardia.

"Christ!" Carpenter marveled. "That's cen-



turies ago. Where the hell did Nathan Riley get that? You'd better join the experts in Ward T and follow this up."

The Archaeologist followed it up, checked his references and sent in his report. Carpenter read it and was stunned. He called an emergency meeting of his staff of experts.

"Gentlemen," he announced, "Ward T is something bigger than teleportation. Those shock patients are doing something far more incredible . . . far more meaningful. Gentlemen, they're traveling through time."

The staff rustled uncertainly. Carpenter nodded emphatically.

"Yes, gentlemen. Time travel is here. It has not arrived the way we expected it . . . as a result of expert research by qualified specialists; it has come as a plague . . . an infection . . . a disease of the war . . . a result of combat injury to ordinary men. Before I continue, look through these reports for documentation."

The staff read the stenciled sheets. PFC Nathan Riley . . . disappearing into the early twentieth century in New York; M/Sgt Lela Machan . . . visiting the first century in Rome; Corp/2 George Hanmer . . . journeying into the nineteenth century in England. And all the rest of the twenty-four patients, escaping the turmoil and horrors of modern war in the twenty-second century by fleeing to Venice and the Doges, to Jamaica and the buccaneers, to China and the Han Dynasty, to Norway and Eric the Red, to any place and any time in the world.

"I needn't point out the colossal significance of this discovery," General Carpenter pointed out.



"Think what it would mean to the war if we could send an army back in time a week or a month or a year. We could win the war before it started. We could protect our Dream . . . poetry and beauty and the fine culture of America . . . from barbarism without ever endangering it."

The staff tried to grapple with the problem of winning battles before they started.

"The situation is complicated by the fact that these men and women of Ward T are non compos. They may or may not know how they do what they do, but in any case they're incapable of communicating with the experts who could reduce this miracle to method. It's for us to find the key. They can't help us."

The hardened and sharpened specialists looked around uncertainly.

"We'll need experts," General Carpenter said.

The staff relaxed. They were on familiar ground again.

"We'll need a Cerebral Mechanist, a Cyberneticist, a Psychiatrist, an Anatomist, an Archaeologist and a first-rate Historian. They'll go into that ward and they won't come out until their job is done. They must get the technique of time travel."

The first five experts were easy to draft from other war departments. All America was a tool chest of hardened and sharpened specialists. But there was trouble locating a first-class Historian until the Federal Penitentiary operated with the army and released Dr. Bradley Scrim from his twenty years at hard labor. Dr. Scrim was acid and jagged. He had held the chair of Philosophic His-

tory at a Western university until he spoke his mind about the war for the American Dream. That got him the twenty years hard.

Scrim was still intransigent, but induced to play ball by the intriguing problem of Ward T.

"But I'm not an expert," he snapped. "In this benighted nation of experts, I'm the last singing grasshopper in the ant heap."

Carpenter snapped up the intercom. "Get me an Entomologist," he said.

"Don't bother," Scrim said. "I'll translate. You're a nest of ants . . . all working and toiling and specializing. For what?"

"To preserve the American Dream," Carpenter answered hotly. "We're fighting for poetry and culture and education and the Finer Things in Life."

"You're fighting to preserve me," Scrim said. "That's what I've devoted my life to. And what do you do with me? Put me in jail."

"You were convicted of enemy sympathizing and fellow-traveling," Carpenter said.

"I was convicted of believing in the American Dream," Scrim said. "Which is another way of saying I had a mind of my own."

Scrim was also intransigent in Ward T. He stayed one night, enjoyed three good meals, read the reports, threw them down and began hollering to be let out.

"There's a job for everyone and everyone must be on the job," Colonel Dimmock told him. "You don't come out until you've got the secret of time travel."

"There's no secret I can get," Scrim said.



"Do they travel in time?"

"Yes and no."

"The answer has to be one or the other. Not both. You're evading the—"

"Look," Scrim interrupted wearily. "What are you an expert in?"

"Psychotherapy."

"Then how the hell can you understand what I'm talking about? This is a philosophic concept. I tell you there's no secret here that the army can use. There's no secret any group can use. It's a secret for individuals only."

"I don't understand you."

"I didn't think you would. Take me to Carpenter."

They took Scrim to Carpenter's office where he grinned at the general malignantly, looking for all the world like a red-headed, underfed devil.

"I'll need ten minutes," Scrim said. "Can you spare them out of your tool box?"

Carpenter nodded.

"Now listen carefully. I'm going to give you all the clues to something vast, so strange, so new, that it will need all your fine edge to cut into it."

Carpenter looked expectant.

"Nathan Riley goes back in time to the early twentieth century. There he lives the life of his fondest dreams. He's a big-time gambler, the friend of Diamond Jim Brady and others. He wins money betting on events because he always knows the outcome in advance. He won money betting on Eisenhower to win an election. He won money betting on a prizefighter named Marciano to beat another prizefighter named La Starza. He

made money investing in an automobile company owned by Henry Ford. There are the clues. They mean anything to you?"

"Not without a Sociological Analyst," Carpenter answered. He reached for the intercom.

"Don't bother. I'll explain. Let's try some more clues. Lela Machan, for example. She escapes into the Roman empire where she lives the life of her dreams as a *femme fatale*. Every man loves her. Julius Caesar, Brutus, the entire Twentieth Legion, a man named Ben Hur. Do you see the fallacy?"

"No."

"She also smokes cigarettes."

"Well?" Carpenter asked after a pause.

"I continue," Scrim said. "George escapes into England of the nineteenth century where he's a member of parliament and the friend of Gladstone, Canning and Disraeli, who takes him riding in his Rolls Royce. Do you know what a Rolls Royce is?"

"No."

"It was the name of an automobile."

"So?"

"You don't understand yet?"

"No."

Scrim paced the floor in exaltation. "Carpenter, this is a bigger discovery than teleportation or time travel. This can be the salvation of man. I don't think I'm exaggerating. Those two dozen shock victims in Ward T have been H-Bombed into something so gigantic that it's no wonder your specialists and experts can't understand it."

"What the hell's bigger than time travel, Scrim?"



"Listen to this, Carpenter. Eisenhower did not run for office until the middle of the twentieth century. Nathan Riley could not have been a friend of Diamond Jim Brady's and bet on Eisenhower to win an election . . . not simultaneously. Brady was dead a quarter of a century before Ike was President. Marciano defeated La Starza fifty years after Henry Ford started his automobile company. Nathan Riley's time traveling is full of similar anachronisms."

Carpenter looked puzzled.

"Lela Machan could not have had Ben Hur for a lover. Ben Hur never existed in Rome. He never existed at all. He was a character in a novel. She couldn't have smoked. They didn't have tobacco then. You see? More anachronisms. Disraeli could never have taken George Hanmer for a ride in a Rolls Royce because automobiles weren't invented until long after Disraeli's death."

"The hell you say," Carpenter exclaimed. "You mean they're all lying?"

"No. Don't forget, they don't need sleep. They don't need food. They're not lying. They're going back in time all right. They're eating and sleeping back there."

"But you just said their stories don't stand up. They're full of anachronisms."

"Because they travel back into a time of their own imagination. Nathan Riley has his own picture of what America was like in the early twentieth century. It's faulty and anachronistic because he's no scholar; but it's real for him. He can live there. The same is true for the others."

Carpenter goggled.

"The concept is almost beyond understanding.



These people have discovered how to turn dreams into reality. They know how to enter their dream realities. They can stay there, live there, perhaps forever. My God, Carpenter, *this* is your American dream. It's miracle-working, immortality, God-like creation, mind over matter. . . . It must be explored. It must be studied. It must be given to the world."

"Can you do it, Scrim?"

"No, I cannot. I'm a historian. I'm noncreative, so it's beyond me. You need a poet . . . a man who understands the creation of dreams. From creating dreams on paper or canvas it oughtn't to be too difficult to take the step to creating dreams in actuality."

"A poet? Are you serious?"

"Certainly I'm serious. Don't you know what a poet is? You've been telling us for five years that this war is being fought to save the poets."

"Don't be facetious, Scrim, I—"

"Send a poet into Ward T. He'll learn how they do it. He's the only man who can. A poet is half doing it anyway. Once he learns, he can teach your psychologists and anatomists. Then they can teach us; but the poet is the only man who can interpret between those shock cases and your experts."

"I believe you're right, Scrim."

"Then don't delay, Carpenter. Those patients are returning to this world less and less frequently. We've got to get at that secret before they disappear forever. Send a poet to Ward T."

Carpenter snapped up his intercom. "Send me a poet," he said.

He waited, and waited . . . and waited . . . while



America sorted feverishly through its two hundred and ninety millions of hardened and sharpened experts, its specialized tools to defend the American Dream of beauty and poetry and the Better Things in Life. He waited for them to find a poet, not understanding the endless delay, the fruitless search; not understanding why Bradley Scrim laughed and laughed and laughed at this final, fatal disappearance.





## *Afterword* *to*

### **“Disappearing Act”**

THE FIRST BOOK offering new (as opposed to reprinted) short stories was the Healy & McComas *Tales of Space and Time* in 1951; it had a sequel and in its brief span published at least two stories of enormous value and influence—Kris Neville’s “Bettyann” and Anthony Boucher’s “The Quest for St. Aquin”—but sales were not promising and the series was abandoned. In 1953 Ballantine Books tried it again, commissioning Fred Pohl to edit for paperback original the *Star* series which competed for new stories directly with the magazines by offering significantly higher rates. *Star* had a higher survival capacity than *Tales of Space and Time*; as an annual, it lasted six issues until 1959 (and there was a *Star Short Novels* one-shot as well) but once again the period and the vicissitudes of distribution collaborated against ultimate success. When *Star* fell away at the end of the decade, it was seven years until

Harlan Ellison's Doubleday *Dangerous Visions* inaugurated a seven-year period during which the original anthology virtually took the short story away from the magazines. (This second inauguration came to the end of its cycle in 1975 or thereabouts—killed by overproduction, characteristic of imitative publishing, and an inability of the small audience to absorb fifty to eighty original anthologies a year. Now there are five or ten once more.)

Particularly in its early publications, *Star* was a modest success, publishing a number of remarkable stories by writers who were, for the most part, products of the decade. Pohl, somewhat underrated as an editor even to this date (he subsequently edited *Galaxy* for ten years, worked briefly at Ace Books, and less briefly as head of Bantam's small science fiction program, and edited a number of other anthologies) was more open to stylistic and political heresies than even Anthony Boucher (Gold's liberalism was overrated; he ran the tightest of editorial ships which sailed taboo-laden waters, and he rewrote others' work savagely and often capriciously).

"Disappearing Act," which was perhaps the best story *Star* ever published, was certainly the most ideologically adventurous for the era of the two Uncle Joes—Stalin and McCarthy—and the Nixon vice-presidency; Bester's contempt for the sociopolitical mores of the time in America is clear and his satire, even to the inevitable ending, dead-sure.

Alfred Bester himself is worthy of a much longer essay in another book; he was simply the best stylist and most technically gifted of any



writer who wrote science fiction in his time; his two fifties novels, *The Demolished Man* (1952) and *The Stars My Destination* (1956) are not underrated and remain alive, but his dazzling short stories of the decade, collected definitively in *Star Light: The Short Fiction of Alfred Bester* (Berkley, 1977) stand alone. A few of them, much more reprinted than this one, such as "Fondly Fahrenheit," "Time is the Traitor," "They Don't Make Life Like They Used To," deserve to stand at the highest rank of American fiction of the time, right there with Salinger's "For Esme, with Love," Cheever's "The Country Husband," Mailer's "The Man Who Studied Yoga," and Stafford's "In the Zoo." Bester left science fiction at decade's end for the reasons most of the best writers left (he became a senior editor at *Holiday*, doing celebrity interviews and travelogues on a decent and deserved expense account); he returned in 1974, when *Holiday* was sold by its publishers. Since then he has published perhaps a dozen short stories and a novel, *The Computer Connection*. A new novel, just finished, should be published by Pocket Books at about the time this anthology appears.

B. N. M.





## *The Altar at Midnight*

C.M. Kornbluth

HE HAD quite a rum-blossom on him for a kid, I thought at first. But when he moved closer to the light by the cash register to ask the bartender for a match or something, I saw it wasn't that. Not just the nose. Broken veins on his cheeks, too, and the funny eyes. He must have seen me look, because he slid back away from the light.

The bartender shook my bottle of ale in front of me like a Swiss bell-ringer so it foamed inside the green glass.

"You ready for another, sir?" he asked.

I shook my head. Down the bar, he tried it on the kid—he was drinking scotch and water or something like that—and found out he could push him around. He sold him three scotch and waters in ten minutes.

When he tried for number four, the kid had his courage up and said, "I'll tell you when I'm ready for another, Jack." But there wasn't any trouble.

It was almost nine and the place began to fill up. The manager, a real hood type, stationed himself by the door to screen out the high-school kids and give the big hello to conventioners. The girls came hurrying in, too, with their little makeup cases and their fancy hair piled up and their frozen faces with the perfect mouths drawn on them. One of them stopped to say something to the manager, some excuse about something, and he said: "That's aw ri'; getcha assina dressing room."

A three piece band behind the drapes at the back of the stage began to make warmup noises and there were two bartenders keeping busy. Mostly it was beer—a midweek crowd. I finished my ale and had to wait a couple of minutes before I could get another bottle. The bar filled up from the end near the stage because all the customers wanted a good, close look at the strippers for their fifty-cent bottles of beer. But I noticed that nobody sat down next to the kid, or, if anybody did, he didn't stay long—you go out for some fun and the bartender pushes you around and nobody wants to sit next to you. I picked up my bottle and glass and went down on the stool to his left.

He turned to me right away and said: "What kind of a place is this, anyway?" The broken veins were all over his face, little ones, but so many, so close, that they made his face look something like marbled rubber. The funny look in his eyes was it—the trick contact lenses. But I tried not to stare and not to look away.

"It's okay," I said. "It's a good show if you don't mind a lot of noise from—"

He stuck a cigarette into his mouth and poked



the pack at me. "I'm a spacer," he said, interrupting.

I took one of his cigarettes and said: "Oh."

He snapped a lighter for the cigarettes and said: "Venus."

I was noticing that his pack of cigarettes on the bar had some kind of yellow sticker instead of the blue tax stamp.

"Ain't that a crock?" he asked. "You can't smoke and they give you lighters for a souvenir. But it's a good lighter. On Mars last week, they gave us all some cheap pen-and-pencil sets."

"You get something every trip, hah?" I took a good, long drink of ale and he finished his scotch and water.

"Shoot. You call a trip a 'shoot.' "

One of the girls was working her way down the bar. She was going to slide onto the empty stool at his right and give him the business, but she looked at him first and decided not to. She curled around me and asked if I'd buy her a li'l ole drink. I said no and she moved on to the next. I could kind of feel the young fellow quivering. When I looked at him, he stood up. I followed him out of the dump. The manager grinned without thinking and said, "G'night, boys," to us.

The kid stopped in the street and said to me: "You don't have to follow me around, Pappy." He sounded like one wrong word and I would get socked in the teeth.

"Take it easy. I know a place where they won't spit in your eye."

He pulled himself together and made a joke of it. "This I have to see," he said. "Near here?"

"A few blocks."

We started walking. It was a nice night.

"I don't know this city at all," he said. "I'm from Covington, Kentucky. You do your drinking at home there. We don't have places like this." He meant the whole Skid Row area.

It's not so bad," I said. "I spend a lot of time here."

"Is that a fact? I mean, down home a man your age would likely have a wife and children."

"I do. The hell with them."

He laughed like a real youngster and I figured he couldn't even be twenty-five. He didn't have any trouble with the broken curbstones in spite of his scotch and waters. I asked him about it.

"Sense of balance," he said. "You have to be tops for balance to be a spacer—you spend so much time outside in a suit. People don't know how much. Punctures. And you aren't worth a damn if you lose your point."

"What's that mean?"

"Oh. Well, it's hard to describe. When you're outside and you lose your point, it means you're all mixed up, you don't know which way the can—that's the ship—which way the can is. It's having all that room around you. But if you have a good balance, you feel a little tugging to the ship, or maybe you just know which way the ship is without feeling it. Then you have your point and you can get the work done."

"There must be a lot that's hard to describe."

He thought that might be a crack and he clammed up on me.

"You call this Gandytown," I said after a while.



"It's where the stove-up old railroad men hang out. This is the place."

It was the second week of the month, before everybody's pension check was all gone. Oswiak's was jumping. The Grandsons of the Pioneers were on the juke singing the Man from Mars Yodel and old Paddy Shea was jigging in the middle of the floor. He had a full seidel of beer in his right hand and his empty left sleeve was flapping.

The kid balked at the screen door. "Too damn bright," he said.

I shrugged and went on in and he followed. We sat down at a table. At Oswiak's you can drink at the bar if you want to, but none of the regulars do.

Paddy jigged over and said: "Welcome home, Doc." He's a Liverpool Irishman; they talk like Scots, some say, but they sound like Brooklyn to me.

"Hello, Paddy. I brought somebody uglier than you. Now what do you say?"

Paddy jigged around the kid in a half-circle with his sleeve flapping and then flopped into a chair when the record stopped. He took a big drink from the seidel and said: "Can he do this?" Paddy stretched his face into an awful grin that showed his teeth. He has three of them. The kid laughed and asked me: "What the hell did you drag me into here for?"

"Paddy says he'll buy drinks for the house the day anybody uglier than he is comes in."

Oswiak's wife waddled over for the order and the kid asked us what we'd have. I figured I could start drinking, so it was three double scotches.



After the second round, Paddy started blowing about how they took his arm off without any anesthetics except a bottle of gin because the red-ball freight he was tangled up in couldn't wait.

That brought some of the other old gimps over to the table with their stories.

Blackie Bauer had been sitting in a boxcar with his legs sticking through the door when the train started with a jerk. Wham, the door closed. Everybody laughed at Blackie for being that dumb in the first place, and he got mad.

Sam Fireman has palsy. This week he was claiming he used to be a watchmaker before he began to shake. The week before, he'd said he was a brain surgeon. A woman I didn't know, a real old Boxcar Bertha, dragged herself over and began some kind of story about how her sister married a Greek, but she passed out before we found out what happened.

Somebody wanted to know what was wrong with the kid's face—Bauer, I think it was, after he came back to the table.

"Compression and decompression," the kid said. "You're all the time climbing into your suit and out of your suit. Inboard air's thin to start with. You get a few redlines—that's these ruptured blood vessels—and you say the hell with the money; all you'll make is just one more trip. But, God, it's a lot of money for anybody my age! You keep saying that until you can't be anything but a spacer. The eyes are hard-radiation scars."

"You like dot all ofer?" asked Oswiak's wife politely.

"All over, ma'am," the kid told her in a misera-



ble voice. "But I'm going to quit before I get a Bowman Head."

I took a savage gulp at the raw scotch.

"I don't care," said Maggie Rorty. "I think he's cute."

"Compared with—" Paddy began, but I kicked him under the table.

We sang for a while, and then we told gags and recited limericks for a while, and I noticed that the kid and Maggie had wandered into the back room—the one with the latch on the door.

Oswiak's wife asked me, very puzzled: "Doc, w'y dey do dot flyink by planyets?"

"It's the damn govermint," Sam Fireman said.

"Why not?" I said. "They got the Bowman Drive, why the hell shouldn't they use it? Serves 'em right." I had a double scotch and added: "Twenty years of it and they found out a few things they didn't know. Redlines are only one of them. Twenty years more, maybe they'll find out a few more things they didn't know. Maybe by the time there's a bathtub in every American home and an alcoholism clinic in every American town, they'll find out a whole lot of things they didn't know. And every American boy will be a pop-eyed, blood-raddled wreck, like our friend here, from riding the Bowman Drive."

"It's the damn govermint," Sam Fireman repeated.

"And what the hell did you mean by that remark about alcoholism?" Paddy said, real sore. "Personally, I can take it or leave it alone."

So we got to talking about that and everybody there turned out to be people who could take it or leave it alone.

It was maybe midnight when the kid showed at the table again, looking kind of dazed. I was drunker than I ought to be by midnight, so I said I was going for a walk. He tagged along and we wound up on a bench at Screwball Square. The soap-boxers were still going strong.. As I said, it was a nice night. After a while, a pot-bellied old auntie who didn't give a damn about the face sat down and tried to talk the kid into going to see some etchings. The kid didn't get it and I led him over to hear the soap-boxers before there was trouble.

One of the orators was a mush-mouthed evangelist. "And oh, my friends," he said, "when I looked through the porthole of the spaceship and beheld the wonder of the Firmament—"

"You're a stinkin' Yankee liar!" the kid yelled at him. "You say one damn more word about can-shootin' and I'll ram your spaceship down your lyin' throat! Wheah's your redlines if you're such a hot spacer?"

The crowd didn't know what he was talking about, but "wheah's your redlines" sounded good to them, so they heckled mushmouth off his box with it.

I got the kid to a bench. The liquor was working in him all of a sudden. He simmered down after a while and asked: "Doc, should I've given Miz Rorty some money? I asked her afterward and she said she'd admire to have something to remember me by, so I gave her my lighter. She seem' to be real pleased with it. But I was wondering if maybe I embarrassed her by asking her right out. Like I tol' you, back in Covington, Kentucky, we don't have places like that. Or maybe we did and I just



didn't know about them. But what do you think I should've done about Miz Rorty?"

"Just what you did," I told him. "If they want money, they ask you for it first. Where you staying?"

"Y.M.C.A.," he said, almost asleep. "Back in Covington, Kentucky, I was a member of the Y and I kept up my membership. They have to let me in because I'm a member. Spacers have all kinds of trouble, Doc. Woman trouble. Hotel trouble. Fam'ly trouble. Religious trouble. I was raised a Southern Baptist, but wheah's Heaven, anyway? I ask' Doctor Chitwood las' time home before the redlines got so thick—Doc, you aren't a minister of the Gospel, are you? I hope I di'n' say anything to offend you."

"No offense, son," I said. "No offense."

I walked him to the avenue and waited for a fleet cab. It was almost five minutes. The independent cabs roll drunks and dent the fenders of fleet cabs if they show up in Skid Row and then the fleet drivers have to make reports on their own time to the company. It keeps them away. But I got one and dumped the kid in.

"The Y Hotel," I told the driver. "Here's five. Help him in when you get there."

When I walked through Screwball Square again, some college kids were yelling "wheah's your redlines" at old Charlie, the last of the Wobblies.

Old Charlie kept roaring: "The hell with your breadlines! I'm talking about atomic bombs. Right—up—there!" And he pointed at the Moon.

It was a nice night, but the liquor was dying in me.

There was a joint around the corner, so I went in and had a drink to carry me to the club; I had a bottle there. I got into the first cab that came.

"Athletic Club," I said.

"Inna dawghouse, harh?" the driver said, and he gave me a big personality smile.

I didn't say anything and he started the car.

He was right, of course. I was in everybody's doghouse. Some day I'd scare hell out of Tom and Lise by going home and showing them what their daddy looked like.

Down at the Institute, I was in the doghouse.

"Oh, dear," everybody at the Institute said to everybody, "I'm sure I don't know what ails the man. A lovely wife and two lovely grown children and she had to tell him 'either you go or I go.' And drinking! And this is rather subtle, but it's a well-known fact that neurotics seek out low company to compensate for their guilt-feelings. The places he frequents. Doctor Francis Bowman, the man who made space-flight a reality. The man who put the Bomb Base on the Moon! Really, I'm sure I don't know what ails him."

The hell with them all.



## *Afterword* *to*

### **“The Altar at Midnight”**

CYRIL M. KORNBLUTH (the “M,” like the “S” in Truman’s name, was apparently for nothing other than good luck, of which Kornbluth, unlike the President, had little) was an acerbic, owlsh man born in 1924, published in 1939, published widely by 1941, at the top of the field of science fiction by 1953, and dead of a stroke in early 1958, an event which seemed retrospectively inevitable to all who knew him. His collaborations with Fred Pohl, most notably in the 1952 *Gravy Planet/The Space Merchants*, remain in print as his uncollaborative work does not; there is the distinct possibility that if Kornbluth had not had a collaborator of such eminence in the field who worked so assiduously afterwards to keep the joint work alive, he would have fallen as far from memory as Mark Clifton, Winston K. Marks, Frank Riley, or F. L. Wallace.

Such a fall would be unfortunate, as almost all

of Kornbluth's professional and personal life was unfortunate, because his was a major talent for the short story. Uneasy at novel length, he had perhaps the greatest technical facility with the short story in science fiction of anyone in the decade except for Alfred Bester; and as notable as "The Altar at Midnight" is, it is merely typical of his later work. The pain Kornbluth brought to his characters and narrations might have been unbearable had it not been for his control; this is one definition—and not the least—of an artist, although Kornbluth, running with the science fiction crowd of his time, was made uneasy by all such talk. "Don't do anything if it comes too easy," the young Larry M. Janifer heard him mumbling brokenly at a party.

Like many of his contemporaries toward the end of the decade, Kornbluth had one overriding professional ambition: to get the hell out of science fiction. (His opinion of the genre and what it did to most of its best writers is well articulated in "Ms Found in a Chinese Fortune Cookie," one of his last stories.) Although one historical novel and a commercial novel were in progress at the time of his death, according to Fred Pohl, the only result of his struggles is a posthumous paperback novel published in 1959 under the pseudonym of Jordan Park which title falls willingly from memory. A suspense novel about the revenge quest of a protagonist trying to kill the South American dictator responsible for the murder of his family, the novel has all of Kornbluth's bitterness but little of his facility and almost none of the characterological depth. The unfortunate truth of Kornbluth's



career, like so many others, is that he simply wrote science fiction better than he wrote anything; he needed the strictures of the category to hold in place what might have otherwise been a vision of appalling bleakness. The science fiction markets of his time—and perhaps of any time—were unable to provide him with the income, audience, and literary recognition which he deserved; but without them he might not have been a writer at all.

“The Altar at Midnight” was used by Horace Gold in 1955 as perhaps the best exemplification of the science fiction he wanted *Galaxy* to publish: stories of such credibility and offhand naturalistic color that they had the appearance of *Saturday Evening Post* stories fifty years hence. There was, of course, no *Saturday Evening Post* or fiction of its species a mere decade and a half later, whereas *Galaxy*, in whatever labored transmogrification, and science fiction have survived the mass-market short story into 1980. Gold wanted science fiction to fuse with and eventually become indistinguishable from the ongoing stream of American literature, but he did his work better and American literature much worse than either of them ever knew. Nevertheless, “The Altar at Midnight” remains as perhaps the prototypical *Galaxy* standard of excellence; this is the kind of story which would not have existed had it not been for Horace Gold and the genre thus incalculably reduced. *Galaxy*’s legacy is persistent: the story is a shade self-conscious and creaks a little at the end (and of course an alternate history has somewhat undercut its veracity), but it lives now

as very few American literary short stories of the period live. This is what they used to call in Midwood High School social studies classes a glittering generality, but it is true and I will passionately defend it.

B. N. M.



## *New Blood*

James E. Gunn

THE YOUNG MAN was stretched out flat on the padded hospital table, his bare left arm muscular and brown on the table beside him. The wide, flat band of a sphygmomanometer was tight around his bicep, and the inside of his elbow, where the veins were blue trceries, had been washed with soap and water, swabbed with alcohol, stained brown with iodine.

His eyes followed the quick efficiency of the technician. Her movements were as crisp as the white uniform.

She opened the left-hand door of the big, old refrigerator and took an empty brown bottle from the second shelf. There was a handle at the bottom, fastened to the bottle by a metal band; it was raised now. Swishing beneath it was an inch of sodium citrate. The rest was vacuum.

The technician broke the tab, stripped off the metal cap, exposing the rubber gasket. From a

cardboard box beneath the table she pulled a few feet of plastic tubing. At each end it had a needle. One went into the donor's procaine-deadened vein. The other was thrust through the gasket into the bottle.

Dark-red blood raced through the tube, spurted into the bottle; the sodium citrate swirled pinkly. A moment later it was the color of grape juice, frothing at the top.

The technician printed the date and the donor's name in the spaces provided on the label. At the bottom she put her initials. She stuck a piece of adhesive tape above the label and wrote a number on it: 31,197; the same number was written on two small test tubes.

"Keep making a fist," she said, turning the bottle.

When the bottle was full, she closed a clamp on the tube and pulled the needle from the bottle. A square of gauze and a strip of tape replaced the needle in the donor's arm. She drained the blood in the tubing into the test tubes and slipped them into pockets in a tiny cloth apron hung over the neck of the bottle.

The tubing and needles were tossed away, and a strip of tape was pressed over the top of the bottle.

At the workbench by the window, the technician dabbed three blood samples onto two glass slides, one divided into sections marked A and B. She slipped them onto a light-box with a translucent glass top; to one sample she added a drop of clear serum from a green bottle marked "Anti-A" in a commercial rack. "Anti-B" came from a brown bottle; "Anti-Rh" from a clear one.

She rocked the box back and forth on its pivots.



The donor was sitting up now, watching her with interested eyes.

Sixty seconds later the red cells of the samples marked A and B were still evenly suspended. In the third sample, the cells had clumped together visibly.

"You're O-neg all right," the technician said. She scribbled it across the label and on the strip of tape that sealed the top of the pint of blood.

The donor's young lips twisted at the corners.

"Valuable," the technician said briskly, making out a card and then a slip of paper. "Only kind we buy. Shall we put you on our professional donor's list?"

Without hesitation the young man shook his head.

The technician shrugged. She handed him the card. "Thanks anyway. Here's your blood type. Stay seated in the waiting room for ten minutes. The paper is a voucher for twenty-five dollars. You can cash it at the cashier's office—by the front door as you go out."

For a moment after the young man's broad back had disappeared from the doorway, the technician stared after him. Then she shrugged, turned, and slipped the pint of blood onto the refrigerator's top left-hand shelf for serology tests.

A pint of whole blood—new life in a bottle for someone who might die without it. Within a few days the white cells will begin to die, the blood will decline in ability to clot. With the aid of refrigeration and the citrate solution, the red cells will last—some of them—for three weeks. After that the blood will be sent to the separator for the plasma or sold to a commercial company for sep-

aration of some of the plasma's more than seventy proteins, the serum albumin, the gamma globulins—

A pint of blood. Market price: \$25. In a few hours it will be on the second shelf from the top, right-hand side of the refrigerator, with the other pints of O-type blood.

But this blood was special. It had everything other blood had and something extra that made it unique. There had never been any blood quite like it.

Twenty-five dollars? How much is life worth?

The old man was seventy years old. His body was limp on the hard hospital bed. In the sudden silence after the cut-out of the air conditioner's gentle murmur, the harsh unevenness of his breathing was loud. The only movement in the private room was the spasmodic rise and fall of the sheet that covered the old body.

He was living—barely. He had used up his allotted threescore years and ten. It wasn't merely that he was dying. We all are. With him it was imminent.

Dr. Russell Pearce held one bony wrist in his firm, young right hand. His face was serious, his dark eyes steady, his tanned skin well molded over strong bones.

The old man's face was yellow over a grayish blue, the color of death. It was bony, the wrinkled skin pulled back like a mask for the skull. Once he might have been handsome. Now his eyes were sunken, the closed eyelids dark over them, and his nose was a thin, arching beak.



There is a kinship in age just as there is a kinship in infancy. Between the two, men differ, but at the extremes they are much the same.

Pearce had seen old men in the wards, charity cases most of them, picked up on the North Side, filthy, winos. The only differences with this man were a little care and a few million dollars. Where this man's hair was groomed snow, the others would be yellowish gray, long, scraggly on the seamed, thin necks. Where this man's skin was scrubbed and immaculate, the others would have rolled dirt in the wrinkles, sores in the crevices.

Pearce laid the arm gently down beside the body and slowly stripped back the sheet. The differences were minor. In dying we are much the same. Once this old man had been tall, strong, vital. Now the thin body was emaciated; the rib case struggled through the skin, fluttered. The old veins stood out, knotted, ropy, blue, on the sticklike legs.

"Pneumonia?" Dr. Easter asked with professional interest. He was an older man, his hair gray at the temples, his appearance distinguished, calm.

"Not yet. Malnutrition. You'd think he'd eat more, get better care. Money is supposed to take care of itself."

"It doesn't follow. You don't order around a million dollars."

"Anemia," Pearce went on. "Bleeding from the duodenal ulcer, I'd guess. Pulse weak, rapid. Blood pressure low. Arteriosclerosis and all the damage that entails."

Beside him a nurse made marks on a chart. Her

face was smooth and young; the skin glowed healthily.

"Let's have a blood count," Pearce said briskly. "Urinalysis. Requisition a pint of blood."

"Transfusion?" Easter asked, lifting a groomed eyebrow.

"It'll help—temporarily, anyway."

"But he's dying." It was almost half a question.

"Sure. We all are." Pearce smiled grimly. "Our business is to postpone it as long as we can."

When Pearce opened the door and stepped into the hall, Dr. Easter was talking earnestly to a tall, blond, broad-shouldered man in an expensively cut business suit. The man was about Easter's age, somewhere between forty-five and fifty. The face was strange: it didn't match the body. There was a thin, predatory look to it which was accentuated by slate-gray eyes.

The man's name was Carl Jansen. He was personal secretary to the old man who was dying inside the room. Dr. Easter performed the introductions, and the men shook hands. Pearce reflected that the term "personal secretary" might cover a multitude of duties.

"Dr. Pearce, I'll only ask you one question," Jansen said in a voice as flat and cold as his eyes. "Is Mr. Weaver going to die?"

"Of course he is," Pearce snapped. "None of us escape. If you mean is he going to die within the next few days, I'd say 'yes'—if I had to answer yes or no."

"What's wrong with him?" Jansen asked suspiciously.

"He's outlived his body. Think of it as a



machine. It's worn out, falling apart, one organ failing after another."

"His father lived to be ninety-one, his mother ninety-six."

Pearce looked at Jansen steadily, unblinking. "They didn't make a million dollars. We live in an age that has almost conquered disease, but that has inflicted its price. The stress and strain of modern life tear us apart. Every million Weaver has made cost him five years of living."

"What are you going to do—just let him die?"

Pearce's eyes were just as cold as Jansen's. "As soon as possible we'll give him a transfusion. Does he have any relatives, close friends?"

"There's no one closer than me."

"We'll need two pints of blood for every pint we give Weaver. Arrange it."

"Mr. Weaver will pay for whatever he uses."

"He'll replace it if possible. That's the hospital rule."

Jansen's eyes dropped. "There'll be plenty of volunteers from the office."

When Pearce was beyond the range of his low, penetrating voice, Jansen said, "Can't we get somebody else? I don't like him."

"That's because he's harder than you are," Easter said easily. "He'd be a good match for the old man when he was in his prime."

"He's too young."

"That's why he's good. The best geriatrician in the Middle West. He can be detached, objective. All doctors need a touch of ruthlessness. Pearce needs more than most; he loses every patient sooner or later. He's got it." Easter looked at Jan-

sen, smiling. "When men reach our age, they start getting soft. They start getting subjective about death."

The requisition for one unit of blood arrived at the blood bank. The hospital routine began. From the cluttered, makeshift cubicle on the first floor came a crisp technician. From one of the ropy veins she drew five cubic centimeters of blood, almost purple inside the slim barrel of the hypodermic.

The old man didn't stir. In the silence his breathing was a raucous noise.

Back at the workbench, she typed the blood sample quickly, efficiently. She wrote down the results on an 8½ by 11 printed form: patient's name, date, room, doctor—Type: O. Rh: neg.

Divided by a double-ruled line was a section headed "Donors." The technician opened the right-hand door of the refrigerator and inspected the labels of the bottles on the second shelf from the top. She selected one and transferred to the sheet the name of the donor, bottle number, type, and Rh factor.

She put samples of the donor's and the patient's blood into two small test tubes and spun them for a moment in the old centrifuge. When she removed them, the red cells were at the bottom of the straw-colored serum. She poured off the serum into separate test tubes.

A drop of donor's serum in a sample of the patient's blood provided the major crossmatch: it didn't make the red cells clump, and even under the microscope, after centrifuging, the cells were perfect, evenly suspended circles. A drop or two



of patient's serum in a sample of the donor's blood and the minor crossmatch was done.

The technician signed the form and telephoned the nurse in charge that the blood was ready when needed. The nurse came for the blood in a few minutes. The technician took out a red-bordered label. She wrote:

|              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| FOR          | 9-4        |
| LEROY WEAVER |            |
| RM. 305      | DR. PEARCE |

She pasted it vertically on the pint of blood beside the original label. The nurse, nodding her appreciation, carried the bottle away casually, familiarly.

Dr. Pearce studied the charts labeled "Leroy Weaver." He picked up the report from the hematology laboratory. Red cell count: 2,360,000/cmm. Anemia, all right. Worse than he'd even suspected. That duodenal ulcer was losing a lot of blood.

The transfusion would help. It would be temporary, but everything is, at best. In the end, it is all a matter of time. Maybe it would revive Weaver enough to get some food down him. He might surprise them all and walk out of this hospital yet.

He picked up the charts and reports, and he walked down the long, quiet corridor, rubbery underneath, redolent of the perennial hospital odors: alcohol and ether, antiseptic and anesthetic. He opened the door of Room 305, and he walked into the coolness.

He nodded distantly to the nurse on duty in the room, not one of the hospital staff. She was one of

the three full-time nurses hired for Weaver by Jansen.

Pearce picked up the clipboard at the foot of the bed and looked at it. No change. He studied the old man's face. It looked more like death. His breathing was still stertorous; his stained eyelids still veiled his sunken eyes.

What was he? Name him: Five Million Dollars. He was Money. He served no useful function; he contributed nothing to society, nothing to the race. He had been too busy to marry, too dedicated to father. His occupation: money-maker.

Pearce didn't believe that a man with money was necessarily a villain. But anyone who made a million dollars or a multiple of it was necessarily a large part predator and the rest magpie.

Pearce knew why Jansen was worried. When Weaver died, Money died, Power died. Money and Power are not immune from death, and when they fall they carry empires with them.

Pearce looked down at Weaver, thinking these things, and it didn't matter. He was still one of us, still human, still alive. That meant he was worth saving. No other consideration was valid.

Two pint bottles hung from the metal "T"—the clear, antiseptic, saline solution and the dark life fluid. A glass T-joint reduced two plastic tubes into one. Below was a transparent filter. At the end of the tube was a 20-gauge needle.

The nurse released the clamp closing the tube just below the saline solution. The salt water ran, bubbling a little, through the tubing, the joint—backing up to the clamp below the blood—the



filter, and spurted from the needle tip. The nurse clamped it off close to the needle.

Now the tubes were full. They were free of air bubbles that could be forced into the patient's veins to cause an embolism.

The clamp below the saline solution was closed off. The nurse waited while Pearce picked up the needle and studied Weaver's arm. No need bothering with procaine.

The antecubital vein was available, swollen across the inside of the elbow. Pearce swabbed it with alcohol and iodine, pushed in the needle with practiced ease, and taped it down. He nodded to the nurse.

She released the clamp under the blood. Slowly it stained the water, and then swirled darkly as she slowly eased open the bottom clamp. In a second it was all blood, running slowly through the long, transparent tubing into the receptive vein, new blood bringing new life to the old, worn-out mechanism on the hard hospital bed.

*New blood for old*, Pearce thought. Money can buy anything. "A little faster."

The nurse opened the bottom clamp a little wider. In the pint bottle, the level of the life fluid dropped faster.

Life. Dripping. Flowing. Making the old new.

The old man took a deep breath. The exhausted laboring of his chest got easier.

Pearce studied the old face, the beaklike nose, the thin, bloodless lips, looking cruel even in their pallor. New life, perhaps. But nothing can reverse the long erosion of the years. Bodies wear out. Nothing can make them new.

Drop by drop the blood flowed from the pint bottle through the tubing into an old man's ancient veins. Someone had given it or sold it. Someone young and healthy, who could make more purple life stuff, saturated with healthy red cells, vigorous white scavengers, platelets, the multiple proteins, who could replace it all in less than ninety days.

Pearce thought about Richard Lower, the seventeenth-century English anatomist who performed the first transfusion, and the twentieth-century Viennese immunologist, Karl Landsteiner, who made transfusions safe when he discovered the incompatible blood groups among human beings.

Now there was this old man, who was getting the blood through the efforts of Lower and Landsteiner and—he glanced inquisitively at the bottle and translated the upside-down printing into meaningfulness—a donor named Cartwright—this old man who needed it, who couldn't make the red cells fast enough any longer, who couldn't keep up with the rate he was losing them internally.

What was dripping through the tubes was life, a gift of the young to the old, of the healthy to the sick.

The old man's eyelids flickered.

When Pearce made his morning rounds, the old man was watching him with faded blue eyes. Pearce blinked once and picked up the skin-and-bone wrist again and counted automatically. "Feeling better, eh?"



He got his second shock. The old man nodded.

"Fine, Mr. Weaver. We'll get a little food down you, and in a little while you'll be as good as new."

He glanced at his watch, looked away, and glanced back at it again. Gently, puzzledly, he lowered the old arm down beside the thin, sheeted body. He wrapped the wide, flat band of the sphygmomanometer around the stringy bicep and pumped it tight, listening at the inside of the elbow with his stethoscope. He looked at the gauge and let the air hiss out and listened for a moment at the old man's chest.

He sat back thoughtfully beside the bed ignoring the bustling nurse. Weaver was making a surprising rally for a man in as bad shape as he had been. The pulse was strong and steady. Blood pressure was up. Somehow the transfusion had triggered hidden stores of energy and resistance.

Weaver was fighting back.

Pearce felt a strange and unprofessional feeling of elation.

Next day Pearce thought the eyes that watched him were not quite so faded. "Comfortable?" he asked. The old man nodded. His pulse was almost normal for a man of his age.

On the third day, Weaver started talking.

The old man's thready voice whispered disjointed and meaningless reminiscences. Pearce nodded understandingly and he nodded, inwardly, to himself. Arteriosclerosis had left its mark: chronic granular kidney, damage to the left ventricle of the heart, malfunction of the brain from a cerebral hemorrhage or two.

On the fourth day, Weaver was sitting up in bed talking to the nurse in a cracked, sprightly voice. "Yes-sirree," he said toothlessly. "That was the day I whopped 'em. Gave it to 'em good, I did. Let 'em have it right between the eyes. Always hated those kids. You must be the doctor," he said suddenly, turning toward Pearce. "I like you. Gonna see that you get a big check. Take care of people I like. Take care of those I don't like, too." He chuckled; it was an evil, childish sound.

"Don't worry about that," Pearce said gently, picking up Weaver's wrist. "Concentrate on getting well."

The old man nodded happily and stuck a finger in his mouth to rub his gums. "You'll git paid," he mumbled. "Don't you worry about that."

Pearce looked down at the wrist he was holding. It had filled out amazingly. "What's the matter with your gums?"

"Itch," Weaver got out around his finger. "Like blazes."

On the fifth day Weaver walked to the toilet.

On the sixth day he took a shower. When Pearce came in he was sitting on the edge of the bed, dangling his feet. Weaver looked up quickly as Pearce entered, his eyes alert, no longer so sunken. His skin has a subcutaneous glow of health. Like his wrist and arm, his face had filled out. Even his legs looked firmer, almost muscular.

He was taking the well-balanced hospital diet and turning it into flesh and fat and muscle.

With his snowy hair, he looked like an ad for everybody's grandfather.

Next day, his hair began to darken.



"How old are you, Mr. Weaver?" Pearce asked sharply.

"Seventy," Weaver said proudly. "Seventy my next birthday, June fifth. Born in Wyoming, boy, in a sod hut. Still Indians around then. Many's the time I seen 'em, out with my paw. Never give us no trouble, though. Timid bunch, mostly."

"What color was your hair?"

"Color of a raven's wing. Had the blackest, shiniest hair in the country. Gals used to beg to run their fingers through it." He chuckled reminiscently. "Used to let 'em."

He stuck his finger in his mouth and massaged his gums ecstatically.

"Still itch?" Pearce asked.

"Like a Wyoming chigger." He chuckled. "You know what's wrong with me, boy? In my second childhood. That's what. I'm cutting teeth."

During the second week, Weaver's mind turned to business, deserting the past. A telephone was installed beside his bed, and he spent half his waking time in short, clipped conversations about incomprehensible deals and manipulations. The other half was devoted to Jansen, who was so conveniently on hand whenever Weaver called for him that Pearce thought he must have appropriated a hospital room.

Weaver was picking up the reins of empire.

While his mind roamed restlessly over possessions, ways of keeping and augmenting them, his body repaired itself like a self-servicing mechanism. His first tooth came through—a canine. After that they appeared rapidly. His hair

darkened almost perceptibly; within the week it was as dark as he had described. His face filled out, the wrinkles smoothing themselves like a ruffled lake when the wind has gentled. His body became muscular and vigorous; the veins retreated under the skin to become blue trceries. The eyes darkened to a fiery blue—

The lab tests were additional proof of what Pearce had begun to suspect. Arteriosclerosis had never thickened those veins or else, somehow, the damage of that fibrous tissue had been repaired. The kidneys functioned perfectly. The heart was as strong and efficient a pump as it had ever been. There was no evidence of a cerebral hemorrhage.

By the end of that week Weaver looked like a man of thirty. From birth, his body had aged no more than thirty years.

"Carl," Weaver was saying as Pearce entered the room, "I want a woman."

"That's easy," Jansen answered, shrugging. "Any particular one?"

"You don't understand," Weaver said bitingly. "I want one to marry. I made a mistake before; I'm not going to repeat it. A man in my position needs an heir. I'm going to have one. Yes, Carl—and you can hide that look of incredulity a little better—at my age!" He swung around quickly toward Pearce. "That's right, isn't it, doctor?"

Pearce shrugged. "There's no reason you can't father a child."

"Get this, Carl. I'm as strong and as smart as I ever was, maybe stronger and smarter. Some people are going to learn that very soon. I've been



given a second chance, haven't I, doctor?"

"You might call it that. What are you going to do with it?"

"I'm going to do better, doctor. Better than I did before. This time I'm not going to make any mistakes. And you, doctor, do you know what you're going to do?"

"No. Tell me what I'm going to do."

Weaver's eyes twisted to Pearce's face. "You think I'm just talking. Don't make that mistake. You're going to find out why."

"Why?"

"Why I've recovered like I have. Don't try to kid me. You've never seen anything like it. I'm not seventy years old anymore. My body isn't. My mind isn't. Why?"

"What's your guess?"

"I never guess. I know. I get the facts from those who have them, and then I decide. That's what I want from you—the facts. I've been rejuvenated."

"You've been talking to Easter."

"Of course."

"But you never got that language from him. He'd never commit himself to that."

Weaver lowered at Pearce from under dark eyebrows, "What was done to me?"

"What does it matter? If you've been rejuvenated, that should be enough for any man."

"When Mr. Weaver asks a question," Jansen thrust in icily, "Mr. Weaver wants an answer."

Weaver brushed him aside. "Dr. Pearce doesn't frighten. But Dr. Pearce is a reasonable man. He believes in facts. He lives by logic. Understand me, doctor! I may be thirty now, but I will be

seventy again. Before then I want to know how to be thirty again."

"Ah," Pearce sighed. "You're not talking about rejuvenation now. You're talking about immortality."

"Why not?"

"It's not for mortals. The human body wears out. Threescore years and ten. That—roughly—is what we're allotted. After that we start falling apart."

"I've had mine. Now I'm starting over at thirty. I've got forty to go. After that, what? Forty more?"

"We all die," Pearce said flatly. "Nothing can stop that. Not one man born has not come to the grave at last. There's a disease we contract at birth from which none of us recover; it's invariably fatal. Death."

"Suppose somebody develops a resistance to it!"

"Oh, I didn't mean that death was a specific disease," Pearce said quickly. "We die in many ways: accident, infection—" And senescence, Pearce thought. For all we know, that's a disease. It could be a disease. Etiology: virus, unisolated, unsuspected, invades at birth or shortly thereafter—or maybe transmitted at conception.

Incidence: total.

Symptoms: slow degeneration of the physcial entity, appearing shortly after maturity, increasing debility, failure of the circulatory system through arteriosclerosis and heart damage, malfunction of senses and organs, loss of cellular regenerative ability, susceptibility to secondary invasions—

Prognosis: One hundred percent fatal.



"Everything dies," Pearce went on smoothly. "Trees, planets, sun—It's natural, inevitable—" But it isn't. Natural death is a relatively new thing. It appeared only when life became multicellular and complicated. Maybe it was the price for complexity, for the ability to think.

Protozoa don't die. Metazoa—sponges, flatworms, coelenterates—don't die. Certain fish don't die, except through accident. "Voles are animals that never stop growing and never grow old." Where did I read that? And even the tissues of the highest vertebrates are immortal under the right conditions.

Carrel and Ebeling proved that. Give the cell enough of the right food, and it will never die. Cells from every part of the body have been kept alive indefinitely in vitro.

Differentiation and specialization—that meant that any individual cell didn't find the perfect conditions. Besides staying alive, it had duties to perform for the whole. A plausible explanation, but was it true? Wasn't it just as plausible that the cell died because the circulatory system broke down?

Let the circulatory system remain sound, regenerative, and efficient, and the rest of the body might well remain immortal.

Nothing's natural," Weaver said. "You gave me a transfusion. Immunities can be transferred with the blood, Easter told me. Who donated that pint of blood?"

Pearce sighed. "Someone named Marshall Cartwright."

The blood bank was in the oldest part of the

building. Pearce led the way down the hot, narrow corridors, as far south on the east wing's second floor as possible, down a wandering stairway, to the square, cluttered little room.

"If you're smart," Jansen told him on the stairs, "you'll cooperate with Mr. Weaver. Do what he asks you. Tell him what he wants to know. You'll get taken care of. If not—?" Jansen smiled unpleasantly.

Pearce laughed uneasily. "What can Weaver do to me?"

"Don't find out," Jansen advised.

The technician accepted the job without comment. She flipped the pages of a ledger, searching. "Weaver?" she said. "Oh, here it is. The fourth." Her finger traveled across the sheet. "O neg. Hasn't been replaced, by the way."

Pearce turned on Jansen. "I thought you were going to take care of that."

"You'll get your blood tomorrow," the secretary growled. "Who was the donor?"

"Marshall Cartwright," said the technician. "O neg. Kline: O. K. Replaced—Now I remember. That was the day after our television appeal. We ran low on O neg, and our professional donor list was exhausted. Got a big response."

"Remember him?" asked Jansen.

She frowned and turned her head away to stare out the window. "That was the third. We have more than twenty donors a day. And that was over a week ago."

"Think!" Jansen demanded.

"I'm thinking," she flared. "What do you want to know?"



"What he looked like. What he said. His address."

"Was there something wrong with the blood?"

Pearce grinned suddenly. "'Contrariwise,' said Tweedledee."

A brief smile slipped across the technician's face. "We don't get many complaints like that. I can give you his address easy enough." She riffled through a box of four-by-five index cards. "Funny. He sold his blood once but he didn't want to do it again." She walked across to the table against the east wall and opened a black, three-ring binder. She leafed through it.

"This is our registration and release form. Let's see, the third. Bean. Parker. Cartwright. Marshall Cartwright. Abbot Hotel. No phone listed."

"Abbot," Jansen said thoughtfully. "Sounds like a flop joint. Does that bring anything back?" he asked the technician insistently. "He didn't want his name on the donor's list."

Slowly, regretfully, she shook her head. "What's all this about anyway? Weaver? Isn't that the old boy up in 305 who made such a miraculous recovery?"

"Right," Jansen said, brushing the question away. "We'll want photostats of the two entries. Shall we take the books along now—?"

"We'll see that you get them," Pearce cut in.

"Today," Jansen said.

"Today," Pearce agreed.

"That's all, then," Jansen said. "If you remember anything, get in touch with Mr. Weaver or me, Carl Jansen. You know how to reach us. There'll be something in it for you."

Something in it, something in it, Pearce thought. The slogan of a class. "What's in it for the human race? Never mind. You've got what you came for."

"I always do," Jansen said intently. "Mr. Weaver and me—we always get what we come for. Remember that!"

Pearce remembered while the young-old man named Leroy Weaver grew a handsome set of teeth, as white as his hair was black, and directed the course of his commercial empire from the hospital room, chafed at Pearce's delay in giving him the answer to his question, at the continual demands for blood samples, at his own enforced idleness, and slyly pinched the nurses.

Before the week was over, Weaver had forced through his discharge from the hospital and Pearce had located a private detective.

The black paint on the frosted glass of the door said:

### JASON LOCKE

#### Confidential Investigations

But Locke wasn't Pearce's preconception of a private eye. He wasn't tough—not on the outside. The hardness was inside, and he didn't let it show.

Locke was middle-aged, graying, his face firm and tanned, a big man dressed in a well-draped tropical suit in light cocoa; he looked like a successful executive. Business wasn't that good. The office was shabby, deteriorating, the furniture was little better, and there was no secretary or receptionist.

He was just the man Pearce wanted.



He listened to Pearce and watched him with dark, steady eyes.

"I want you to find a man," Pearce said. "Marshall Cartwright. Last address: Abbot Hotel."

"Why?"

"What difference does it make?"

"I have a license to keep—and a desire to keep out of jail."

"There's nothing illegal about it," Pearce said quickly, "but there might be danger. I won't lie to you; it's a medical problem I can't explain. It's important to me that you find Cartwright. It's important to him—it might even be important to the world. The danger lies in the fact that other people are looking for him; if they spot you they might get rough. I want you to find Cartwright before they do."

"Who is 'they?' "

Pearce shrugged helplessly. "Pinkerton, Burns, International—I don't know. One of the big firms, probably."

"Is that why you didn't go to them?"

"One reason. I won't conceal anything, though. The man hiring them is Leroy Weaver."

Locke looked interested. "I heard the old boy was back on the prowl. Have you got any pictures, descriptions, anything to help me spot him?"

Pearce looked down at his hands. "Nothing except the name. He's a young man. He sold a pint of his blood on the third. He refused to have his name added to our professional donor's list. He gave his address then as the Abbot."

"I know it," Locke said. "A flytrap on Ninth. That means he's left town, I'd say."

"Why do you say that?"



"That's why he sold the blood. To get out of town. He wasn't interested in selling it again; he wasn't going to be around. And anyone who would stay at a place like the Abbot wouldn't toss away a chance at some regular, effortless money."

"That's what I figured," Pearce said, nodding slowly. "Will you take the job?"

Locke swung around in his swivel chair and stared out the window across the light standards, transformers, and streetcar lines of Twelfth Street. It was nothing to look at, but he seemed to draw decision from it. "Fifty dollars a day and expenses," he said, swinging back. "Sixty if I have to go out of town."

It was that afternoon Pearce discovered that he was being followed.

He walked along the warm, autumn streets, and the careless crowds, the hurrying, anonymous shoppers, passed on either side without a glance and came behind, and conviction walked with him. He moved through the air-conditioned stores, quickly or dawdling over a display of deodorants at a counter, glancing surreptitiously behind, seeing nothing but sure that someone was watching.

The symptoms were familiar. They were mainly those of hysterical women, most often in that wistful, tormented period of middle age, but occasionally in adolescence or early womanhood. Pearce had never expected to share them: the sensitivity in the back of the neck and between the shoulder blades that made him want to shrug it away, the leg-tightening desire to hurry, to run, to dodge in a doorway, into an elevator—

Pearce nodded to himself and lingered. When



he went to his car, he went slowly, talked to the parking lot attendant for a moment before he drove away, and drove straight home.

He never did identify the man or men who shadowed him, then or later. It kept up for weeks, so that when it finally ended he felt strangely naked and alone.

When he got to his apartment, the telephone was ringing. That was not surprising. A doctor's phone rings a hundred times as often as that of an ordinary citizen.

Dr. Easter was the caller. The essence of what he wanted to say was that Pearce should not be foolish; Pearce should cooperate with Mr. Weaver.

"Of course I'm cooperating," Pearce exclaimed. "I cooperate with all my patients."

"That isn't what I meant," Dr. Easter said in a voice as unctuous as molasses. "Work with him, not against him. You'll find it's worth your while."

"It's worth my while to practice medicine the best way I can," Pearce said evenly. "Beyond that no one has a call on me, and no one ever will."

"Very fine sentiments," Dr. Easter agreed pleasantly. "The question is: Will Mr. Weaver think you are practicing medicine properly? That's something to consider."

Pearce lowered the phone gently into the cradle, thinking about how it was practicing medicine, being a doctor—and he knew he could never be happy at anything else. He turned over in his mind the subtle threat Easter had made; it could be done. The specter of malpractice was never far away, and a powerful alliance of money

and respectability could come close to lifting a license.

He considered Easter, and he knew that it was better to risk the title than to give away the reality.

The next week was a time of wondering and waiting, of keeping busy, a problem a doctor seldom faces. It was a time of uneventful routine.

Then it seemed as if everything happened at once.

As he walked from his car toward the front door of the apartment house, a hand reached out of the shadows beside an ornamental fir and pulled him into the darkness.

Before he could say anything or struggle, a hand was clamped tight over his mouth, and a voice whispered in his ear, "Quiet now! This is Locke. The private eye, remember?"

Pearce nodded stiffly. Slowly the hand relaxed. As his eyes adjusted to the darkness, Pearce made out Locke's features. His face was heavily, darkly bearded, and something had happened to the nose. Locke had been in a brawl; the nose was broken, and the face was cut and bruised.

"Never mind me," Locke said huskily. "You should see the other guys."

As Pearce drew back a little, he could see that Locke was dressed in old clothes looking like hand-me-downs from the Salvation Army. "Sorry I got you into it," he said.

"Part of the job. Listen. I haven't got long, and I want to give you my report."

"It can wait. Come on up. Let me take a look at that face. You can send me a written re—"

"Nothing doing," Locke said heavily. "I'm not



signing my name to anything. Too dangerous. From now on I'm going to keep my nose clean. I did all right for a few days. Then they caught up with me. Well, they're sorry, too. You wanta hear it?"

Pearce nodded.

For a while Locke thought he might get somewhere. He had registered at the Abbot, got friendly with the room clerk, and finally asked about his friend Cartwright, who had flopped there a couple of weeks earlier. The clerk was willing enough to talk. Trouble was, he didn't know much, and what little he knew he wouldn't have told to a stranger. Guests at the Abbot were liable to be persecuted by police and collection agents, and the clerk had suspicions that every questioner was from the Health Board.

Cartwright had paid his bill and left suddenly, no forwarding address given. They hadn't heard from him since, but people had been asking about him. "In trouble, eh?" the clerk asked wisely. Locke nodded gravely.

The clerk leaned closer. "I had a hunch, though, that Cartwright was heading for Des Moines. Something he said . . . don't remember what now."

Locke took off for Des Moines with a sample of Cartwright's handwriting from the Abbot register. He had canvassed the Des Moines hotels, rooming houses, motels. Finally, at a first-class hotel, he noticed the name "Marshall Carter."

Cartwright had left the Abbot on the ninth. Carter had checked into the Des Moines hotel on the tenth. The handwritings looked identical.

Locke caught up with Carter in East St. Louis.

He turned out to be a middle-aged salesman of photographic equipment who hadn't been near Kansas City in a year.

End of the trail.

"Can anyone else find him?" Pearce asked.

"Not if he don't want to be found," Locke said shrewdly. "A nationwide search—an advertising campaign—they'd help. But if he's changed his name and doesn't go signing his new one to a lot of things that might fall into an agency's hands, nobody is going to find him. That's what you wanted, wasn't it?"

Pearce looked at him steadily, not saying anything.

"He's got no record," Locke went on. "That helps. Got a name check on him from the bigger police departments and the F.B.I. No go. No record, no fingerprints. Not under that name."

"How'd you get hurt?" Pearce asked, after a moment.

"They were waiting for me outside my office when I got back. Two of 'em. Good, too. But not good enough. 'Lay off!' they said. O.K. I'm not stupid. I'm laying off, but I wanted to finish the job first."

Pearce nodded slowly. "I'm satisfied. Send me a bill."

"Bill nothing!" Locke growled. "Five hundred is the price. Put it in an envelope and mail it to my office—no checks. I should charge you more for using me as a stakeout, but maybe you had your reasons. Watch your step, Doc!"

He was gone then, slipping away through the shadows so quickly and silently that Pearce started to speak before he realized that the detec-



tive was not beside him. Pearce started after him for a moment, shrugged, and opened the front door.

Going up in the elevator, he was thoughtful. In front of his apartment door, he fumbled the key out absently, inserted it in the lock, and took the key out to check on it when the key wouldn't turn. He noticed then that the door was half-an-inch ajar.

Pearce gave the door a little push. It swung inward noiselessly. The light from the hall streamed over his shoulder, but it only lapped a little way into the dark room. He peered into it for a moment, hunching his shoulders as if that might help.

"Come in, Dr. Pearce," someone said softly.  
The lights went on.

Pearce blinked once. "Good evening, Mr. Weaver. And you, Jansen. How are you?"

"Fine, doctor," Weaver said. "Just fine."

He didn't look fine, Pearce thought. He looked older, haggard, tired. Was he worried? Weaver was sitting in his favorite chair, a green leather one beside the fireplace. Jansen was standing beside the wall switch. "You've made yourself right at home, I see."

Weaver chuckled. "We told the manager we were friends of yours, and, of course, he didn't doubt us. But then we are, aren't we?"

Pearce looked at Weaver and then at Jansen. "I wonder. Do you have any friends—or only hirelings." He turned his eyes back to Weaver. "You don't look well. I'd like you to come back to the hospital for a checkup—"

"I'm feeling fine, I said." Weaver's voice was lifted a little before it dropped back to a conversational tone. "We wanted to have a little talk—about cooperation."

Pearce looked at Jansen. "Funny. I don't feel very talkative. I've had a hard day."

Weaver's eyes didn't leave Pearce's face. "Get out, Carl," he said gently.

"But Mr. Weaver—" Jansen began, his gray eyes darkening.

"Get out, Carl," Weaver repeated. "Wait for me in the car."

After Carl was gone, Pearce sank down in the armchair facing Weaver. He let his gaze drift around the room, lingering on the polished darkness of the hi-fi record player and the slightly lighter wood of the desk in the corner. "Did you find anything?" he asked.

"Not what we were looking for," Weaver replied calmly.

"What was that?"

"Cartwright's location."

"What makes you think I'd know anything about that?"

Weaver clasped his hands lightly in his lap. "Can't we work together?"

"Certainly. What would you like to know—about your health?"

"What did you do with those samples of blood you took from me? You must have taken back that pint I got."

"Almost. Part of it we separated. Got the plasma. Separated the gamma globulin from it with zinc. Used it on various animals."

"And what did you find out?"



"The immunity is in the gamma globulin. It would be, of course. That's the immunity factor. You should see my old rat. As frisky as the youngest rat in the lab and twice as healthy."

"So it's part of me, too?" Weaver asked.

Pearce shook his head slowly. "That's just the original globulins diluted in your blood."

"Then to live forever I would have to have periodic transfusions?"

"If it's possible to live forever," Pearce said, shrugging.

"It is. You know that. There's at least one person who's going to live forever. Cartwright. Unless something happens to him. That would be a tragedy, wouldn't it? In spite of all precautions, accidents happen. People get murdered. Can you imagine some careless kid spilling that golden blood into a filthy gutter? Some jealous woman putting a knife in that priceless body?"

"What do you want, Weaver?" Pearce asked evenly. "You've got your reprieve from death. What more can you ask?"

"Another. And another. Without end. Why should some nobody get it by accident? What good will it do him? Or the world? He needs to be protected—and used. Properly handled he could be worth . . . well, whatever men will pay for life. I'd pay a million a year—more if I had to. Other men would pay the same. We'd save the best men in the world, those who have demonstrated their ability by becoming wealthy. Oh, yes. Scientists, too—we'd select some of those. People who haven't gone into business—leaders, statesmen."

"What about Cartwright?"

"What about him?" Weaver blinked as if recalled from a lovely dream. "Do you think anyone who ever lived would have a better life, would be better protected, more pampered? Why, he wouldn't have to ask for a thing. No one would dare say 'no,' to him for fear he might kill himself. He'd be the hen that laid the golden eggs."

"He'd have everything but freedom."

"A much-overrated commodity."

"The one immortal man in the world."

"That's just it," Weaver said, leaning forward. "Instead of only one, there would be many."

Pearce shook his head from side to side as if he had not heard. "A chance meeting of genes—a slight alteration by cosmic ray or something even more subtle and accidental—and immortality is created. Some immunity to death—some means of keeping the circulatory system young, resistant, rejuvenated. 'Man is as old as his arteries,' Cazali said. Take care of your arteries, and they will keep your cells immortal."

"Tell me, man! Tell me where Cartwright is before all that is lost forever." Weaver leaned forward urgently.

"A man who knows he's got a million years to live is going to be pretty darned careful," Pearce said.

"That's just it," Weaver said, his eyes narrowing. "He doesn't know. If he'd known, he'd never have given his blood." His face changed subtly. "Or does he know—now?"

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't you tell him?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."



"Don't you? Don't you remember going to the Abbot Hotel on the evening of the ninth, of asking for Cartwright, of talking to him? You should. The clerk identified your picture. And that night Cartwright left."

Pearce remembered the Abbot Hotel all right, the narrow, dark lobby, ancient, grimy, fly-specked. He had thought of cholera and bubonic plague as he crossed it. He remembered Cartwright, too—that fabulous creature, looking seedy and quite ordinary, who had listened, though, and believed and taken the money and gone.

"I don't believe it," Pearce said.

"I should have known right away," Weaver said, as if to himself. "You knew his name that first day. When I asked for it."

"Presuming I did. If I did all that you say. Do you think it was easy for me? To you he's money. What do you think he was to me? That fantastic laboratory, walking around! What wouldn't I have given to study him! To find out how his body worked, to try to synthesize the substance. You have your drives, Weaver, but I have mine."

"Why not combine them, Pearce?"

"They wouldn't mix."

"Don't get so holy, Pearce. Life isn't holy."

"Life is what we make it," Pearce said softly. "I won't have a hand in what you're planning."

Weaver got up quickly from his chair and took a step toward Pearce. "Some of you professional men get delusions of ethics," he said in a kind of muted snarl. "Not many. A few. There's nothing



sacred about what you do. You're just craftsmen, mechanics—you do a job—you get paid for it. There's no reason to get religious about it."

"Don't be absurd, Weaver. If you don't feel religious about what you do, you shouldn't be doing it. You feel religious about making money. Money's sacred to you. Well, life is sacred to me. That's what I deal in, all day long, every day. Death is an old enemy. I'll fight him until the end."

Pearce propelled himself out of his chair. He stood close to Weaver, staring fiercely into the man's blue eyes. "Understand this, Weaver. What you're planning is impossible. What if we all could be rejuvenated? Do you have the slightest idea what would happen? Have you considered what it might do to civilization?"

"No, I can see you haven't. Well it would bring your society tumbling down around your pillars of gold. Civilization would shake itself to pieces like an unbalanced flywheel. Our culture is constructed on the assumption that we spend two decades growing and learning, a few more producing wealth and progeny, and a final decade or two decaying before we die.

"Look back! See what research and medicine have done in the past century. They've added a few years—just a few—to the average lifespan, and our society is groaning at the readjustment. Think what forty years would do! Think what would happen if we never died!

"There's only one way something like this can be absorbed into the race—gradually, so that society can adjust, unknowing, to this new thing in-



side it. All Cartwright's children will inherit the mutation. They must. It must be dominant. And they will survive, because this has the greatest survival factor ever created."

"Where is he?" Weaver asked.

"It won't work, Weaver," Pearce said, his voice rising. "I'll tell you why it won't work. Because you would kill him. You think you wouldn't, but you'd kill him as certainly as you're a member of the human race. You'd bleed him to death, or you'd kill him just because you couldn't stand having something immortal around. You or some other warped specimen of humanity. You'd kill him, or he'd get killed in the riots of those who were denied life, tossed to the wolves of death. What people can't have they destroy. That's been proved over and over."

"Where is he?" Weaver repeated.

"It won't work for a final reason." Pearce's voice dropped as if it had found a note of pity. "But I won't tell you that. I'll let you find out for yourself."

"Where is he?" Weaver insisted softly.

"I don't know. You won't believe that. But I don't know. I didn't want to know. I told him the truth about himself, and I gave him some money, and I told him to leave town, to change his name, hide, anything, but not to be found, to be fertile, to populate the Earth—"

"I don't believe you. You've got him hidden away for yourself. You wouldn't give him a thousand dollars for nothing."

"You know the amount?" Pearce said queerly.

Weaver's lip curled. "I know every deposit

you've made in the last five years, and every withdrawal. You're small, Pearce, and you're cheap, and I'm going to break you."

Pearce smiled, unworried. "No, you're not. You don't dare use violence, because I just might know where Cartwright is hiding. Then you'd lose everything. And you won't try anything else because if you do I'll release the article I've written about Cartwright—I'll send you a copy—and then the fat would really be in the fire. If everybody knew about Cartwright, you wouldn't have a chance to control it, even if you could find him."

At the door, Weaver turned and said, calmly, "I'll be seeing you again."

"That's right," Pearce agreed and thought, *I've been no help to you, because you won't ever believe that I haven't got a string tied to Cartwright.*

*But you're not the one I pity.*

Two days after that came the news of Weaver's marriage, an elopement with a twenty-five-year-old girl from the Country Club district, a Patricia Warren. It was the weekend sensation—wealth and beauty, age and youth.

Pearce studied the girl's picture in the Sunday paper and told himself that surely she had got what she wanted. And Weaver—Pearce knew him well enough to know that he had got what he wanted.

The fourth week since the transfusion passed uneventfully, and the fifth week was only distinguished by a summons from Jansen, which Pearce ignored. The beginning of the sixth week delivered a frantic call from Dr. Easter. Pearce refused to go to Weaver's newly purchased mansion.



They brought him to the hospital in a screaming ambulance, clearing the streets ahead of it with its siren and its flashing red light, dodging through the traffic with its precious cargo: money, personified.

Pearce stood beside the hard, hospital bed, checking the pulse in the bony wrist, and stared down at the emaciated body. It made no impression in the bed. In the silence, the harsh unevenness of the old man's breathing was loud. The only movement was the spasmodic rise and fall of the sheet that covered the old body.

He was living—barely. He had used up his allotted threescore years and ten. It wasn't merely that he was dying. We all are. With him it was imminent.

The pulse was feeble. The gift of youth had been taken away. Within the space of a few days, Weaver had been drained of color, drained of forty years of life.

He was an old man, dying. His face was yellowish over grayish blue, the color of death. It was bony, the wrinkled skin pulled back like a mask for the skull. Once he might have been handsome. Now his eyes were sunken, the closed eyelids dark over them, and his nose was a thin, arching beak.

This time, Pearce thought distantly, there will be no reprieve.

"I don't understand," Dr. Easter muttered. "I thought he'd been given forty years—"

"That was his conclusion," Pearce said. "It was more like forty days. Thirty to forty—that's how long the gamma globulin remains in the bloodstream. It was only a passive immunity. The



only person with any lasting immunity to death is Cartwright, and the only ones he can give it to are his children and their children."

Easter looked around to see if the nurse was listening and whispered, "Couldn't we handle this better? Chance needs a little help sometimes. With semen banks and artificial insemination we could change the makeup of the human race in a couple of generations—"

"If we weren't all wiped out first," Pearce said and turned away coldly.

He waited, his eyes closed, listening to the harshness of Weaver's breathing, thinking of the tragedy of life and death—the being born and the dying, entwined, entangled, all one, and here was Weaver who had run out of life, and there was his child who would not be born for months yet. It was a continuity—a balance—a life for a life, and it had kept humanity stable for millions of years.

And yet—immortality? What might it mean?

He thought of Cartwright, the immortal, the hunted man—and while men remembered they would never let him rest, and if he got tired of hiding and running, he was doomed. The search would go on and on—crippled a little, fortunately, now that Weaver had dropped away—and Cartwright, with his burden, would never be able to live like other men.

He thought of him, trying to adjust to immortality in the midst of death, and he thought that immortality—the greatest gift, surely, that a man could receive—demanded payment in kind, like everything else. For immortality you must surrender the right to live.

God pity you, Cartwright.



"Transfusion, Dr. Pearce?" the nurse repeated.

"Oh, yes," he said hastily. "Might as well." He looked down at Weaver once more. "Send down the requisition. We know his type already—O negative."





## *Afterword* *to*

### **“New Blood”**

“NEW BLOOD” was the first of a series of linked short stories and novelettes (the first two appeared in *Astounding*, the others elsewhere) which became a novel, *The Immortals*, the basis for a short-lived television series in the sixties. In something of a coup, James Gunn became the only science fiction writer ever asked to do a novelization of material based upon his own novel. (He did it, and very well, too, but was not dissuaded from giving up his position as administrator and later faculty member at the University of Kansas, where he has been for more than a decade. Gunn, like Budrys and Phillip Klass, was another who took from his most creative decade the lesson that the academy or the corporation were far better places to be than the commercial fiction markets.)

Gunn, born in 1923, sold his first stories to *Astounding* at the tail end of the forties, but made no impression upon the field until the early fif-

ties, when the majority of his best work was appearing—not in *Astounding*, but in Horace Gold's *Galaxy*. A craftsman, Gunn was always slightly underrated, but his work has appeared at or near the top of the field for a quarter of a century. His novel, *The Listeners*, won second prize in the 1972 John W. Campbell Memorial Award competition. His nonfiction *Alternate Worlds: The Illustrated History of Science Fiction*, a long and important book with more than a few snippets of autobiography, was published by Prentice-Hall in 1975 and remains in print in trade paperback. It is one of the very few books among the recent glut about science fiction which will probably live as long as the genre itself.

Rereading this story and thinking about Gunn's career has led me to a tentative conclusion which I hope Gunn will not resent: he fails of being an absolutely major writer only to the degree of his unusual sanity and low-key technical control. "New Blood," a vastly energetic and not altogether characteristic story, shows the young writer in full, early mastery of his gifts.

B. N. M.



# *The End of Summer*

**Algis Budrys**

## I.

AMERICAPORT HADN'T changed since he'd last seen it, two hundred years before. It was set as far away from any other civilized area as possible, so that no plane, no matter how badly strayed, could possibly miss its landing and crash into a dwelling. Except for the straight-edge swath of the highway leading south, it was completely isolated if you forgot the almost deserted tube station. Its edge was dotted by hangars and a few offices, but the terminal building itself was small, and severely functional. Massive with bar concrete, aseptic with steel and aluminum, it was a gray, bleak place in the wilderness.

Kester Fay was so glad to see it that he jumped impatiently from the big jet's passenger lift. He knew he was getting curious looks from the ground crew clustered around the stainless-steel

ship, but he would have been stared at in any case, and he had seen the sports car parked and waiting for him beside the Administration Building. He hurried across the field at a pace that attracted still more attention, eager to get his clearance and be off.

He swung his memory vault impatiently by the chain from his wristlet while the Landing Clearance officer checked his passport, but the man was obviously too glad to see someone outside the small circle of airlines personnel. He stalled interminably, and while Fay had no doubt that his life out here bored him to tears, it was becoming harder and harder to submit patiently.

"Christopher Jordan Fay," the man read off, searching for a fresh conversational opening. "Well, Mr. Fay, we haven't seen you here since '753. Enjoy your stay?"

"Yes," he answered as shortly as possible. Enjoyed it? Well, yes, he supposed he had, but it was hard to feel that way since he'd played his old American memories at augmented volume all through the flight across the Atlantic. Lord, but he was tired of Europe at this moment; weary of winding grassy lanes that meandered with classic patience among brooks and along creeks, under old stately trees! "It's good to be back where a man can stretch his legs, though."

The official chuckled politely, stamping forms. "I'll bet it is at that. Planning to stay long?"

*Forever, if I can help it,* Fay thought first. But then he smiled ruefully. His life had already been an overdone demonstration that forever was a long time. "For a while, at any rate," he answered,



his impatience growing as he thought of the car again. He shuffled his feet on the case-hardened flooring.

"Shall I arrange for transportation to New York?"

Fay shook his head. "Not for me. But the man who drove my car up might be a customer."

The official's eyebrows rose, and Fay suddenly remembered that America, with its more liberal social attitudes, might tolerate him more than Europe had, but that there were still plenty of conservatives sheltered under the same banner.

As a matter of fact, he should have realized that the official was a Homebody; a Civil Service man, no doubt. Even with a dozen safe places to put it down within easy reach, he still kept his memory vault chained to his wrist. Fay's own eyebrows lifted, and amusement glittered in his eyes.

"Driving down?" The official looked at Fay with a mixture of respect, envy, and disapproval.

"It's only fifteen hundred miles," Fay said with careful nonchalance. Actually, he felt quite sure that he was going to throttle the man if he wasn't let out of here and behind the wheel soon. But it would never do to be anything but bored in front of a Homebody. "I expect to make it in about three days," he added, almost yawning.

"Yes, sir," the man said, instantly wrapping himself in a mantle of aloof politeness, but muttering "Dilly!" almost audibly.

Fay'd hit home with that one, all right! Probably, the man had never set foot in an automobile. Certainly, he considered it a barefaced lie that

anyone would undertake to average fifty mph during a driving day. Safe, cushiony pneumocars were his speed—and he an airlines employee!

Fay caught himself hastily. Everybody had a right to live any way he wanted to, he reminded himself.

But he could not restrain an effervescent grin at the man's sudden injured shift to aloofness.

"All right, sir," the official said crisply, returning Fay's passport. "Here you are. No baggage, of course?"

"Of course," Fay said agreeably, and if that had been intended as a slur at people who traveled light and fast, it had fallen exceedingly flat. He waved his hand cheerfully as he turned away, while the official stared at him sourly. "I'll be seeing you again, I imagine."

"I'm afraid not, sir," the man answered with a trace of malevolence. "United States Lines is shutting down passenger service the first of next deyear."

Momentarily nonplussed, Fay hesitated. "Oh? Too bad. No point to continuing, though, is there?"

"No, sir. I believe you were our first in a hec-toyear and a half." Quite obviously, he considered that as much of a mark of Cain as necessary.

"Well . . . must be dull out here, eh?"

He cocked a satiric eye at the man and was gone, chuckling at that telling blow while the massive exit door swung ponderously shut behind him.

The car's driver was obviously a Worker who'd taken on the job because he needed money for some obscure, Workerish purpose. Fay settled the



business in the shortest possible time, counting out hundred-dollar bills with a rapid shuffle. He threw in another for good measure, and waved the man aside, punching the starter vibrantly. He was back, he was home! He inhaled deeply, breathing the untrammelled air.

Curled around mountains and trailed gently through valleys, the road down through New York State was a joy. Fay drove it with a light, appreciative smile, guiding his car exuberantly, his muscles locked into communion with the automobiles's grace and power as his body responded to each banked turn, each surge of acceleration below the downward crest of a hill. There was nothing like this in Europe—nothing. Over there, they left no room for his kind among their stately people.

He had almost forgotten what it was like to sit low behind the windscreen of a two-seater and listen to the dancing explosions of the unmuffled engine. It was good to be back, here on this open, magnificent road, with nothing before or behind but satin-smooth ferroconcrete, and heaped green mountains to either side.

He was alone on the road, but thought nothing of it. There were very few who lived his kind of life. Now that his first impatience had passed, he was sorry he hadn't been able to talk to the jet's pilot. But that, of course, had been out of the question. Even with all the safety interlocks, there was the chance that one moment's attention lost would allow an accident to happen.

So, Fay had spent the trip playing his memory



on the plane's excellent equipment, alone in the comfortable but small compartment forward of the ship's big cargo cabin.

He shrugged as he nudged the car around a curve in the valley. It couldn't be helped. It was a lonely life, and that was all there was to it. He wished there were more people who understood that it was the only life—the only solution to the problem which had fragmented them into so many social patterns. But there were not. And, he supposed, they were all equally lonely. The Homebodies, the Workers, the Students, and the Teachers. Even, he conceded, the Hoppers. He'd Hopped once himself, as an experiment. It had been a hollow, hysteric experience.

The road straightened, and, some distance ahead, he saw the white surface change to the dark macadam of an urban district. He slowed in response, considering the advisability of switching his safeties in, and decided it was unnecessary as yet. He disliked being no more than a pea in a safetied car's basket, powerless to do anything but sit with his hands and feet off the controls. No; for another moment, he wanted to be free to turn the car nearer the shoulder and drive through the shade of the thick shrubbery and overhanging trees. He breathed deeply of the faint fragrance in the air and once more told himself that *this* was the only way to live, the only way to find some measure of vitality. A Dilly? Only in the jealous vocabularies of the Homebodies, so long tied to their hutches and routines that the scope of mind and emotion had narrowed to fit their microcosm.

Then, without warning, still well on the white surface of open road, the brown shadow darted



out of the bushes and flung itself at his wheels, barking shrilly.

He tried to snap the car out of the way, his face suddenly white, but the dog moved unpredictably, its abrupt yell of pain louder than the scream of Fay's brakes. He felt the soft bump, and then his foot jerked away from the clutch and the car stalled convulsively. Even with his engine dead and the car still, he heard no further sound from the dog.

Then he saw the Homebody boy running toward him up the road, and the expression of his face changed from shocked unpleasantness to remorseful regret. He sighed and climbed out of the car clumsily, trying to think of something to say.

The boy came running up and stopped beside the car, looking up the road with his face drawn into tearful anger.

"You ran over Brownie!"

Fay stared helplessly down at the boy. "I'm sorry, son," he said as gently as he could. He could think of nothing really meaningful to tell him. It was a hopeless situation. "I . . . I shouldn't have been driving so fast."

The boy ran to the huddled bundle at the shoulder of the road and picked it up in his arms, sobbing. Fay followed him, thinking that ten thousand years of experience were not enough—that a hundred centuries of learning and acquiring superficial maturity were still insufficient to shield the emotions trapped in a young boy's body, at the mercy of his glandular system, under a shock like this.

"Couldn't you see him?" the boy pleaded.

Fay shook his head numbly. "He came out of the shrubs—"

"You shouldn't have been driving so fast. You should have—"

"I know." He looked uselessly back up the road, the trees bright green in the sunshine, the sky blue.

"I'm sorry," he told the boy again. He searched desperately for something, some way, to make recompense. "I wish it hadn't happened." He thought of something, finally. "I . . . I know it wouldn't be the same thing, but I've got a dog of my own—a basset hound. He's coming over from Europe on a cargo ship. When he gets here, would you like to have him?"

"Your own dog?" For a moment, the boy's eyes cleared, but then he shook his head hopelessly. "It wouldn't work out," he said simply, and then, as though conscious of guilt at even considering that any other dog could replace his, tightened his arms on the lifeless bundle.

No, it hadn't been such a good idea, Fay realized. If he weren't so snarled up in remorse and confusion, he'd have seen that. Ugly had been his dog and couldn't be separated from him, or he from Ugly. He realized even more strongly just precisely what he had done to the boy.

"Something wrong? Oh—" The Homebody man who had come up the road stopped beside them, his face turning grave. Fay looked at him in relief.

"I had my automatics off," he explained to the man. "I wouldn't have, if I'd known there was a



house around here, but I didn't see anything. I'm terribly sorry about the . . . about Brownie."

The man looked again at the dog in the boy's arms, and winced. Then he sighed and shrugged helplessly. "Guess it was bound to happen sometime. Should have been on a leash. There's still a law of averages."

Fay's fist clenched behind his back, out of sight. The well-worn words bit deep at the very foundation of his vitality, and his mind bridled, but in another moment the spasm of reflexive fear was gone, and he was glad he'd had this harmless outlet for his emotions. Besides, the man was right, and at this moment Fay was forced to be honest enough with himself to admit it. There was still a law of averages, whether Fay and his Dilly kind liked it or not.

"Go on back to the house, son," the man said with another sigh. "There's nothing we can do for Brownie. We'll bury him later. Right now you ought to wash up. I'll be along in a minute."

It was the way he said it—the fatalistic acceptance that no matter what the honest folk did, some blundering, heedless dilettante was going to thwart them—that scored Fay's emotions.

The boy nodded wordlessly, still crying, and began to walk away without looking at Fay again.

But Fay couldn't let him go. Like a man who picks at a splinter, he could not let this pass so simply. "Wait!" he said urgently.

The boy stopped and looked at him woodenly.

"I . . . I know there's nothing—I mean," Fay stumbled, "Brownie was your dog, and there can't

be another one like him. But I do a lot of traveling—" He stopped again, flushing at the Homebody man's knowing look, then pushed on regardless. "I see a lot of people," he went on. "I'll try to find you a dog that hasn't ever belonged to anybody. When I do, I'll bring him to you. I promise."

The boy's lip twitched, suddenly revealing what ten thousand years had taught him. "Thanks, mister," he said half-scornfully, and walked away, cradling his dog.

He hadn't believed him, of course. Fay suddenly realized that no one ever believed a Dilly, whether he was telling the truth or not. He realized, too, that he had done the best he could, and nevertheless failed. He looked regretfully after the boy.

"You didn't have to do that," the man said softly, and Fay noted that some of his reserve and half-contemptuous politeness were gone. "I don't know whether to believe you or not, but you didn't have to do that. Anyway, I'll edit the dog out of his memories tonight. My wife and I'll clean the place up, and he won't notice anything." He paused, reflecting, his eyes dark. "Guess Madge and I'll cut it out of our own minitapes, too."

Fay clenched his teeth in sudden annoyance. Nobody ever believed a Dilly. "No," he said. "I wish you wouldn't do that. I meant what I said." He shook his head again. "I don't like editing. There's always a slip somewhere, and then you know you've got a hole in your memory, but you can never remember what it was."

The man looked at him curiously. "Funny thing



for one of you people to say. I always heard you went for editing in a big way."

Fay kept his face from showing his thoughts. There it was again—that basic lack of understanding and a complete unwillingness to check secondhand tales. The very essence of his kind of life was that no memory, no experience, not be lived and preserved. Besides, he'd always heard that it was the Homebodies who had to edit whole hectoyears to keep from going mad with boredom.

"No," he contented himself with saying. "You're confusing us with the Hoppers. They'll try anything."

The man curled his lip at the mention, and Fay reflected that the introduction of a common outsider seemed helpful in circumstances like this.

"Well . . . maybe you're right," the man said, still not completely trustful, but willing to take the chance. He gave Fay his name, Arnold Riker, and his address. Fay put the slip of paper carefully in his memory vault.

"Anytime I lose that, I'll have lost my memory, too," he commented.

The man grinned wryly. "More likely, you'll remember to forget it tonight," he said, some of his distrust returning at the sight of the spooled tapes.

Fay took that without protest. He supposed Riker had a right to feel that way. "Can I drive you down to your house?"

The man flicked an expressive glance along the car's length and shook his head. "Thanks. I'll walk. There's still a law of averages."

*And you can take that phrase and carve it on*

Humanity's headstone, Fay thought bitterly, but did not reply.

He climbed into the car, flicked on the automatics, and froze, completely immobile from sharply ingrained habit that was the only way to avoid the careless move that just might open the safety switch. He did not even turn his head to look at the man he left behind as the car started itself slowly away, nor did he catch more than a passing glimpse of the house where the boy and his dog had lived together for ten kiloyears.

We guard our immortality so carefully, he thought. So very, very carefully. But there's still a law of averages.

## II.

Perversely, he drove more rapidly than normal for the rest of the trip. Perhaps he was trying to reaffirm his vitality. Perhaps he was running away. Perhaps he was trying to cut down the elapsed time between towns, where his automatics threaded him through the light pedestrian traffic and sent him farther down the road, with each new danger spot safely behind him. At any rate, he arrived at his Manhattan apartment while it was still daylight, stepping off the continuous-impulse elevator with some satisfaction. But his were eyes discontented.

The apartment, of course, was just as he had left it two hectoyears ago. The semirobots had kept it sealed and germicidal until the arrival of his return message yesterday.

He could imagine the activity that had followed, as books and music tapes were broken out



of their helium-flooded vaults, rugs and furnishings were stripped of their cocoons, aerated, and put in place. From somewhere, new plants had come and been set in the old containers, and fresh liquor put in the cabinet. There would be food in the kitchen, clothes in the wardrobes—the latest styles, of course, purchased with credits against the left-behind apparel of two hectoyears before—and there were the same, old familiar paintings on the walls. Really old, not just By-Product stuff.

He smiled warmly as he looked around him, enjoying the swell of emotion at the apartment's comfortable familiarity. He smiled once more, briefly, at the thought that he must some day devise a means of staying in a sealed apartment—wearing something like a fishing lung, perhaps—and watch the semirobots at their refurbishing process. It must be a fascinating spectacle.

But his glance had fallen on the memory vault which he had unchained and put on a coffee table. It faced him with the ageless, silent injunction painted on each of its faces: PLAY ME, and underneath this the block of smaller lettering that he, like everyone else, knew by heart:

If your surroundings seem unfamiliar, or you have any other reason to suspect that your environment and situation are not usual, request immediate assistance from any other individual. He is obligated by strict law to direct you to the nearest free public playback booth, where you will find further instructions. Do not be alarmed, and follow these directions without anxiety, even if they seem strange to you. In extreme situations,



stand still and do not move. Hold this box in front of you with both hands. This is a universally recognized signal of distress. Do not let anyone take this box away from you, no matter what the excuse offered.

He wondered momentarily what had made him notice it; he knew it so well that the pattern of type had long ago become no more than a half-seen design with a recognition value so high that it had lost all verbal significance.

Was it some sort of subconscious warning? He checked his memory hastily, but relaxed when he found none of the telltale vagueness of detail that meant it was time to let everything else wait and get to a playback as fast as possible. He had refreshed his memory early this morning, before starting the last leg of his trip, and it seemed to be good for several more hours, at least.

What was it, then?

He frowned and went to the liquor cabinet, wondering if some train of thought had been triggered off by the accident and was trying to call attention to himself. And when he dropped into an easy chair a few minutes later, a drink in his hand and his eyes still brooding over the vault's legend, he realized that his second guess had been the right one. As usual, one level of his mind had been busy digesting while the surface churned in seeming confusion.

He smiled ruefully. Maybe he wasn't quite as much of a Dilly as he looked and would have liked to believe. Still, a man couldn't live ten thousand years and not put a few things together in his



head. He took a sip of his drink and stared out over the city in the gathering twilight. Somewhere in the graceful furniture behind him, a photoelectric relay clicked, and his high-fidelity set began to play the Karinius Missa. The apartment had not forgotten his moods.

No, he thought, the machines never forgot. Only men forgot, and depended on machines to help them remember. He stared at the vault, and a familiar sophistry occurred to him. "Well," he asked the box labeled PLAY ME, "which is my brain—you or the gray lump in my head?"

The answer depended on his moods, and on his various audiences. Tonight, alone, in an uncertain mood, he had no answer.

He took another drink and sat back, frowning.

At best, he'd offered the boy a shoddy substitute. Even presuming that the passage of ten kiloyears had somehow still left room for a dog without a master, the animal would have to be refamiliarized with the boy at least once or twice a day.

Why? Why did dogs who had always had the same master remember him without any difficulty, even though they seemed to have to reinvestigate their surroundings periodically? Why would Ugly, for instance, remember him joyfully when his ship came? And why would Ugly have to be refamiliarized with this apartment, in which he'd lived with Fay, off and on, for all this time?

The Kinnard dog, whose master insisted on building each new house in a carbon copy of the previous, didn't have anywhere near as much trouble. Why?

He'd heard rumors that some people were re-



cordova canine memories on minitape, but that sort of story was generally classified along with the jokes about the old virgin who switched vaults with her nubile young niece.

Still and all, there might be something in that. He'd have to ask Monkreeve. Monkreeve was the Grand Old Man of the crowd. He had memories the rest of them hadn't even thought of yet.

Fay emptied his glass and got up to mix another drink. He was thinking harder than he had for a long time—and he could not help feeling that he was making a fool of himself. Nobody else had ever asked questions like this. Not where others could hear them, at any rate.

He sat back down in his chair, fingers laced around the glass while the *Missa* ended and the *Lieutenant Kije* suite caught up the tempo of the city as it quickened beneath showers of neon.

PLAY ME. Like a music tape, the memory vault held his life tightly knit in the nested spindles of bright, imperishable minitape.

What, he suddenly asked himself, would happen if he didn't play it tonight?

"If your surroundings seem unfamiliar, or you have any other reason to suspect your environment and situation are not usual . . .

"Obligated by strict law to direct you . . .

"Do not be alarmed . . ."

What? What was behind the whispered stories, the jokes:

"What did the girl in the playback booth say to the young man who walked in by mistake?

"Man, this has been the busiest twenty-seventh of July!" (Laughter)



The thought struck him that there might be all sorts of information concealed in his fund of party conversation.

“If you wish to get to heaven,  
Stay away from twenty-seven.”

And there it was again. Twenty-seven. July twenty-seventh, this time conglomerated with a hangover reference to religion. And that was interesting, too. Man had religions, of course—schismatic trace sects that offered no universally appealing reward to make them really popular. But they must have been really big once, judging by the stamp they’d left on oaths and idiomatic expressions. Why? What did they have? Why had two billion people integrated words like “Heaven,” “Lord God,” and “Christ” into the language so thoroughly that they had endured ten kiloyears?

July twenty-seventh when? Year?

What would happen to him if he ignored PLAY ME just this once?

He had the feeling that he knew all this; that he had learned it at the same time that he had learned to comb his hair and cut his fingernails, take showers and brush his teeth. But he did all that more or less automatically now.

Maybe it was time he thought about it.

But nobody else did. Not even Monkreeve.

So what? Who was Monkreeve, really? Didn’t the very fact that he had thought of it make it all right? That was the basis on which they judged everything else, wasn’t it?

That boy and his dog had really started something.

He realized several things simultaneously, and

set his glass down with a quick thump. He couldn't remember the dog's name. And he was definitely letting the simple problem of following his conscience—and his wounded pride—lead him into far deeper intellectual waters than any boy and his dog had a right.

His cheeks went cold as he tried to remember the name of this morning's hotel, and he shivered violently. He looked at the box labeled PLAY ME.

"Yes," he told it. "Yes, definitely."

### III.

Fay awoke to a bright, sunny morning. The date on his calendar clock was April 16, 11958, and he grinned at it while he removed the vault's contacts from the bare places on his scalp. He noted that all the memories he had brought back from Europe had been rerecorded for the apartment's spare vault, and that the current minitape had advanced the shining notch necessary to record yesterday.

He looked at that notch and frowned. It looked like an editing scratch, and was. It was always there, every morning, but he knew it covered nothing more than the normal Traumatic pause between recording and playback. He'd been told that it was the one memory nobody wanted to keep, and certainly he'd never missed editing it—or, of course, remembered doing it. It was a normal part of the hypnotic action pattern set by the recorder to guide him when he switched over from record to playback, his mind practically blank by that time.

He'd never seen a tape, no matter whose, that



did not bear that one scratch to mark each day. He took pride in the fact that a good many tapes were so hashed out and romanticized as to be almost pure fiction. He hadn't been lying to the boy's father—and he noted the presence of that memory with the utmost satisfaction—he had a driving basic need to see everything, hear everything, sense each day and its events to their fullest, and to remember them with sharp perfect clarity.

He laughed at the vault as he kicked it shut on his way to the bathroom. "Not until tonight," he said to PLAY ME, and then teetered for a breathless moment as he struggled to regain his balance. He set his foot down with a laugh, his eyes sparkling.

"Who needs a car to live dangerously?" he asked himself. But that brought back the memory of the boy, and his lips straightened. Nevertheless, it was a beautiful day, and the basic depression of yesterday was gone. He thought of all the people he knew in the city, one of whom, at least, would be sure to have a contact somewhere or the other that would solve his problem for him.

He ate his breakfast heartily, soaking for an hour in the sensual grip of his bathtub's safety slinging while he spooned the vitalizing porridge, then shrugged into a violet bathrobe and began calling people on the telephone.

He hadn't realized how long he'd been gone, he reflected, after Vera, his welcome to her apartment finished, had left him with a drink while she changed. It was, of course, only natural that some of the old crowd had changed their habits or themselves gone traveling in his absence. Nevertheless, he still felt a little taken aback at the

old phone numbers that were no longer valid, or the really astonishing amount of people who seemed to have edited him out of their memories. Kinnard, of all people! And Lorraine.

Somehow he'd never thought Lorraine would go editor.

"Ready, Kes?"

Vera was wearing a really amazing dress. Apparently, America had gone back toward conservatism, as he might have guessed from his own wardrobe.

Vera, too, had changed somehow—too subtly for him to detect, here in surroundings where he had never seen her before. Hadn't she always been resistant to the fad of completely doing apartments over every seventy years? He seemed to remember it that way, but even with minitapes, the evidence of the eye always took precedence over the nudge of memory. Still, she at least knew where Monkreeve was, which was something he hadn't been able to find out for himself.

"Uh-huh. Where're we going?"

She smiled and kissed the tip of his nose. "Relax, Kes. Let it happen."

Um.

"Grasshoppers as distinct from ants, people given to dancing and similar gay pursuits, or devotees to stimulants," Mondreeve blabbed, gesturing extravagantly. "Take your pick of derivations." He washed down a pill of some sort and braced himself theatrically. "I've given up on the etymology. What'd you say your name was?"

Fay grimaced. He disliked Hoppers and Hopper



parties—particularly in this instance. He wished heartily that Vera had told him what had happened to Monkreeve before she brought him here.

He caught a glimpse of her in the center of an hysterical knot of people, dancing with her seven petticoats held high.

“Whoee!” Monkreeve burst out, detecting the effects of the pill among the other explosions in his system. Fay gave him a searching look, and decided, from the size of his pupils, that he could probably convince himself into an identical state on bread pills, and more than likely was.

“Got a problem, hey, lad?” Monkreeve asked wildly. “Got a dog problem.” He put his finger in his mouth and burlesqued Thought. “Got a dog, got a problem, got a problem, got a dog,” he chanted. “Hell!” he exploded, “go see old Williamson. Old Williamson knows everything. Ask him anything. Sure,” he snickered, “ask him anything.”

“Thanks, Monk,” Fay said. “Glad to’ve met you,” he added in the accepted polite form with editors, and moved toward Vera.

“Sure, sure, Kid. Ditto and check. Whatcha say your name was?”

Fay pretended to be out of earshot, brushed by a couple who were dancing in a tight circle to no music at all, and delved into the crowd around Vera.

“Hi, Kes!” Vera exclaimed, looking up and laughing. “Did Monk give you any leads?”

“Monk has a monkey on his back, he thinks,” Fay said shortly, a queasy feeling in his throat.

“Well, why not try that on the kid? He might

like a change." Vera broke into fresh laughter. Suddenly an inspiration came to her, and she began to sing.

"Oh where, oh where, has my little dog gone? Oh where, oh where can he be?"

The rest of the crowd picked it up. Vera must have told them about his search, for they sang it with uproarious gusto.

Fay turned on his heel and walked out.

The halls of the University library were dim gray, padded with plastic sponge, curving gently with no sharp corners. Doorways slid into walls, the sponge muffled sound, and he wore issued clothes into which he had been allowed to transfer only those personal items which could not possibly cut or pry. Even his vault had been encased in a ball of cellular sponge plastic, and his guide stayed carefully away from him, in case he should fall or stumble. The guide carried a first-aid kit, and like all the library staff, was a certified Doctor of Theoretical Medicine.

"This is Dr. Williamson's interview chamber," the guide told him softly, and pressed a button concealed under the sponge. The door slid back, and Fay stepped into the padded interior of the chamber, divided down the middle by a sheet of clear, thick plastic. There was no furniture to bump into, of course. The guide made sure he was safely in, out of the door's track, and closed it carefully after he had stepped out.

Fay sat down on the soft floor and waited. He started wondering what had happened to the old crowd, but he had barely found time to begin when the door on the other side of the partition



opened and Dr. Williamson came in. Oddly enough, his physiological age was less than Fay's, but he carried himself like an old man, and his entire manner radiated the same feeling.

He looked at Fay distastefully. "Hopper, isn't it? What're you doing here?"

Fay got to his feet. "No, sir. Dilly, if you will, but not a Hopper." Coming so soon after the party, Williamson's remark bit deep.

"Six of one, half a dozen of the other, in time," Williamson said curtly. "Sit down." He lowered himself slowly, testing each new adjustment of his muscles and bones before he made the next. He winced faintly when Fay dropped to the floor with defiant overcarelessness. "Well—go on. You wouldn't be here if the front desk didn't think your research was at least interesting."

Fay surveyed him carefully before he answered. Then he sighed, shrugged mentally, and began. "I want to find a dog for a little boy," he said, feeling more than foolish.

Williamson snorted: "What leads you to believe this is the ASPCA?"

"ASPCA, sir?"

Williamson threw his hands carefully up to heaven and snorted again. Apparently, everything Fay said served to confirm some judgment of mankind on his part.

He did not explain, and Fay finally decided he was waiting. There was a minute's pause, and then Fay said awkwardly: "I assume that's some kind of animal shelter. But that wouldn't serve my purpose. I need a dog that . . . that remembers."

Williamson put the tips of his fingers together and pursed his lips. "So. A dog that remembers,

eh?" He looked at Fay with considerably more interest, the look in his eyes sharpening.

"You look like any other brainless jackanapes," he mused, "but apparently there's some gray matter left in your artfully coiffed skull after all." Williamson was partially bald.

"What would you say," Williamson continued, "if I offered to let you enroll here as an Apprentice Liberator?"

"Would I find out how to get that kind of dog?"

A flicker of impatience crossed Williamson's face. "In time, in time. But that's beside the point."

"I . . . I haven't got much time, sir," Fay said haltingly. Obviously, Williamson had the answer to his question. But would he part with it, and if he was going to, why this rigmarole?

Williamson gestured with careful impatience. "Time is unimportant. And especially here, where we avoid the law of averages almost entirely. But there are various uses for time, and I have better ones than this. Will you enroll? Quick, man!"

"I—Dr. Williamson, I'm grateful for your offer, but right now all I'd like to know is how to get a dog." Fay was conscious of a mounting impatience of his own.

Williamson got carefully to his feet and looked at Fay with barely suppressed anger.

"Young man, you're living proof that our basic policy is right. I wouldn't trust an ignoramus like you with the information required to cut his throat.

"Do you realize where you are?" He gestured at



the walls. "In this building is the world's greatest repository of knowledge. For ten thousand years we have been accumulating opinion and further theoretical data on every known scientific and artistic theory extant in 1973. We have data that will enable Man to go to the stars, travel ocean bottoms, and explore Jupiter. We have here the raw material of symphonies and sonatas that make your current additions sound like a tincup beggar's fiddle. We have the seed of paintings that would make you spatter whitewash over the daubs you treasure, and verse that would drive you mad. And you want me to find you a dog!"

Fay had gotten to his own feet. Williamson's anger washed over him in battering waves, but one thing remained clear, and he kept to it stubbornly.

"Then you won't tell me."

"No, I will not tell you! I thought for a moment that you had actually managed to perceive something of your environment, but you have demonstrated my error. You are dismissed." Williamson turned and stamped carefully out of his half of the interview chamber, and the door slid open behind Fay.

Still and all, he had learned something. He had learned that there was something important about dogs not remembering, and he had a date: 1973.

He sat in his apartment, his eyes once more fixed on *PLAY ME*, and tried a thought on for size: July 27, 1973.

It made more sense that way than it did when the two parts were separated—which could mean nothing, of course. Dates were like the jigsaw



puzzles that were manufactured for physiological four-year-olds: they fit together no matter how the pieces were matched.

When had the human race stopped having children?

The thought smashed him bolt upright in his chair, spilling his drink.

He had never thought of that. Never once had he questioned the fact that everyone was frozen at some apparently arbitrary physiological age. He had learned that such-and-such combined anatomical and psychological configuration was indicative of one physiological age, that a different configuration indicated another. Or had he? Couldn't he tell instinctively—or, rather, couldn't he tell as though the word "age" were applicable to humans as well as inanimate objects?

A lesser thought followed close on the heels of the first: exactly the same thing could be said of dogs, or canaries or parakeets, as well as the occasional cat that hadn't gone wild.

"Gone" wild? Hadn't most cats always been wild?

Just exactly what memories were buried in his mind, in hiding—or rather, since he was basically honest with himself, what memories had he taught himself to ignore? And why?

His skin crawled. Suddenly, his careful, flower-to-flower world was tinged with frost around him, and brown, bare and sharply ragged stumps were left standing. The boy and his dog had been deep water indeed—for his tentative toe had baited a monster of continuous and expanding questions to fang him with rows of dangerous answers.



He shook himself and took another drink. He looked at PLAY ME, and knew where the worst answers must be.

#### IV.

He awoke, and there were things stuck to his temples. He pulled them loose and sat up, staring at the furnishings and the machine that sat beside his bed, trailing wires.

The lights were on, but the illumination was so thoroughly diffused that he could not find its source. The furniture was just short of the radical in design, and he had certainly never worn pajamas to bed. He looked down at them and grunted.

He looked at the machine again, and felt his temples where the contacts had rested. His fingers came away sticky, and he frowned. Was it some sort of encephalograph? Why?

He looked around again. There was a faint possibility that he was recovering from psychiatric treatment, but this was certainly no sanatorium room.

There was a white placard across the room, with some sort of printing on it. Since it offered the only possible source of information, he got off the bed cautiously and, when he encountered no dizziness or weakness, crossed over to it. He stood looking at it, lips pursed and brow furrowed, while he picked his way through the rather simplified orthography.

Christopher Jordan Fay:

If your surroundings seem unfamiliar, or you have any other reason to suspect that your envi-

ronment and situation are unusual, do not be alarmed, and follow these directions without anxiety, even if they seem strange to you. If you find yourself unable to do so, for any reason whatsoever, please return to the bed and read the instructions printed on the machine beside it. In this case, the nearest "free public playback booth" is the supplementary cabinet you see built into the head of the bed. Open the doors and read the supplementary instructions printed inside. In any case, do not be alarmed, and if you are unable or unwilling to perform any of the actions requested above, simply dial "O" on the telephone you see across the room.

Fay looked around once more, identified the various objects, and read on.

The operator, like all citizens, is required by strict law to furnish you with assistance

If, on the other hand, you feel sufficiently calm or are commensurately curious, please follow these directions:

Return to the bed and restore the contacts to the places where they were attached. Switch the dial marked "Record-Playback-Auxiliary Record" to the "Auxiliary Record" position. You will then have three minutes to place your right forearm on the grooved portion atop the machine. Make certain your arm fits snugly—the groove is custom-molded to accept your arm perfectly in one position only.

Finally, lie back and relax. All other actions are automatic.

For your information, you have suffered from loss of memory, and this device will restore it to you.



Should you be willing to follow the above directions, please accept our thanks.

Fay's tongue bulged his left cheek, and he restrained a grin. Apparently, his generator had been an unqualified success. He looked at the printing again, just to be certain, and confirmed the suspicion that it had been done by his own hand. Then, as a conclusive check, he prowled the apartment in search of a calendar. He finally located the calendar-clock, inexpertly concealed in a bureau drawer, and looked at the date.

That was his only true surprise. He whistled shrilly at the date, but finally shrugged and put the clock back. He sat down in a convenient chair, and pondered.

The generator was working just as he'd expected, the signal bouncing off the heaviside layer without perceptible loss of strength, covering the Earth. As to what could happen when it exhausted its radioactive fuel in another five thousand years, he had no idea, but he suspected that he would simply refuel it. Apparently, he still had plenty of money, or whatever medium of exchange existed now. Well, he'd provided for it.

Interesting, how his mind kept insisting it was July 27, 1973. This tendency to think of the actual date as "the future" could be confusing if he didn't allow for it.

Actually, he was some ten-thousand-and-thirty-eight years old, rather than the thirty-seven his mind insisted on. But his memories carried him only to 1973, while, he strongly suspected, the Kester Fay who had written that naïve message had memories that began shortly thereafter.



The generator broadcast a signal which enabled body cells to repair themselves with one hundred percent perfection, rather than the usual less-than-perfect of living organisms. The result was that none of the higher organisms aged, in any respect. Just the higher ones, fortunately, or there wouldn't even be yeast derivatives to eat.

But, of course, that included brain cells, too. Memory was a process of damaging brain cells much as a phonograph recording head damaged a blank record disk. In order to relive the memory, the organism had only to play it back, as a record is played. Except that, so long as the generator continued to put out the signal, brain cells, too, repaired themselves completely. Not immediately, of course, for the body took a little time to act. But no one could possibly sleep through a night and remember anything about the day before. Amnesia was the price of immortality.

He stood up, went to the liquor cabinet he'd located in his search, and mixed himself a drink, noticing again how little, actually, the world had progressed in ten thousand years. Cultural paralysis, more than likely, under the impact of two and a half billion individuals each trying to make his compromise with the essential boredom of eternal life.

The drink was very good, the whiskey better than any he was used to. He envied himself.

They'd finally beaten amnesia, as he suspected the human race would. Probably by writing notes to themselves at first, while panic and hysteria cloaked the world and July 27th marched down through the seasons and astronomers went mad.



The stimulated cells, of course, did not repair the damage done to them before the generator went into operation. They took what they already had as a model, and clung to it fiercely.

He grimaced. Their improved encephalograph probably rammed in so much information so fast that their artificial memories blanketed the comparatively small amount of information which they had acquired up to the 27th. Or, somewhat more likely, the period of panic had been so bad that they refused to probe beyond it. If that was a tape-recording encephalograph, editing should be easily possible.

"I suspect," he said aloud, "that what I am remembering now is part of a large suppressed area in my own memory." He chuckled at the thought that his entire life had been a blank to himself, and finished the drink.

And what he was experiencing now was an attempt on his own part to get that blank period on tape, circumventing the censors that kept him from doing it when he had his entire memory.

And that took courage. He mixed another drink and toasted himself. "Here's to you, Kester Fay +. I'm glad to learn I've got guts."

The whiskey was extremely good.

And the fact that Kester Fay had survived the traumatic hiatus between the twenty-seventh and the time when he had his artificial memory was proof that They hadn't gotten to him before the smash-up.

Paranoid, was he?

He'd stopped the accelerating race toward Tee-Total War, hadn't he?

They hadn't been able to stop him, that was certain. He'd preserved the race of Man, hadn't he?

Psychotic? He finished the drink and chuckled. Intellectually, he had to admit that anyone who imposed immortality on all his fellow beings without asking their permission was begging for the label.

But, of course, he knew he wasn't psychotic. If he were, he wouldn't be so insistent on the English "Kester" for a nickname rather than the American "Chris."

He put the glass down regretfully. Ah, well—time to give himself *all* his memories back. Why was his right arm so strong?

He lay down on the bed, replaced the contacts, and felt the needle slip out of its recess in the forearm trough and slide into a vein.

Scopolamine derivative of some sort, he decided. Machinery hummed and clicked in the cabinets at the head of the bed, and a blank tape spindle popped into position in the vault, which rested on a specially built stand beside the bed.

Complicated, he thought dimly as he felt the drug pumping into his system. I could probably streamline it down considerably.

He found time to think once more of his basic courage. Kester Fay must still be a rampant individual, even in his stagnant, conservative, ten-thousand-year-weighty civilization.

Apparently, nothing could change his fundamental character.

He sank into a coma with a faint smile.

The vault's volume control in the playback



cycle was set to "Emergency Overload." Memories hammered at him ruthlessly, ravaging brain tissue, carving new channels through the packed silt of repair, foaming, bubbling, hissing with voracious energy and shattering impetus.

His face ran through agonized changes in his sleep. He pawed uncertainly and feebly at the contacts on his scalp, but the vital conditioning held. He never reached them, though he tried, and, failing, tried, and tried through the long night, while sweat poured down his face and soaked into his pillow, and he moaned, while the minitapes clicked and spun, one after the other, and gave him back the past.

It was July 27, 1973, and he shivered with cold, uncomprehendingly staring at the frost on the windows, with the note dated 7/27/73 in his hand.

It was July 27, 1973, and he was faint with hunger as he tried to get the lights to work. Apparently, the power was off. He struck a match and stared down at the series of notes, some of them smudged with much unremembered handling, all dated July 27, 1973.

It was July 27, 1973, and the men who tried to tell him it was really Fall in 1989, clustered around his bed in the crowded hospital ward, were lying. But they told him his basic patents on controlled artificial radioactivity had made it possible to power the complicated machinery they were teaching him to use. And though, for some reason, money as an interest-gathering medium was no longer valid, they told him that in his special case, in gratitude, they'd arranged things so there'd be a series of royalties and licensing fees, which would be paid into his ac-



counts automatically. He wouldn't even have to check on them, or know specifically where they came from. But the important part came when they assured him that the machinery—the “vault,” and the “minitapes,” whatever they were, would cure his trouble.

He was grateful for that, because he'd been afraid for a long time that he was going insane. Now he could forget his troubles.

Kester Fay pulled the vault contacts off his forehead and sat up to see if there was an editing scratch on the tape.

But, of course, there wasn't. He knew it before he'd raised his head an inch, and he almost collapsed, sitting on the edge of the bed with his head in his hands.

He was his own monster. He had no idea of what most of the words he'd used in those memories had meant, but even as he sat there, he could feel his mind hesitatingly making the linkages and assigning tags to the jumbled concepts and frightening rationalizations he'd already remembered.

He got up gingerly, and wandered about the apartment, straightening out the drawers he'd upset during his amnesiac period. He came to the empty glass, frowned at it, shrugged, and mixed a drink.

He felt better afterwards, the glow of 100 Proof working itself into his system. The effects wouldn't last, of course—intoxication was a result of damage to the brain cells—but the first kick was real enough. Moreover, it was all he'd gotten accustomed to, during the past ten kiloyears, just



as the Hoppers could drug themselves eternally.

Ten thousand years of having a new personality seemed to have cured the psychosis he'd had with his old one. He felt absolutely no desire to change the world single-handed.

Had it, now? Had it? Wasn't being a dilettante the result of an inner conviction that you were too good for routine living?

And didn't he want to turn the generator off, now that he knew what it did and where it was?

He finished the drink and bounced the glass in his palm. There was nothing that said he had to reach a decision right this minute. He'd had ten kiloyears. It could wait a little longer.

He bathed to the accompaniment of thoughts he'd always ignored before—thoughts about things that weren't his problem, then. Like incubators full of babies ten kiloyears old, and pregnant women, and paralytics.

He balanced that against hydrogen bombs, and still the scales did not tip.

Then he added something he had never known before, but that he had now, and understood why no one ever ventured to cross twenty-seven, or to remember it if he had. For one instant, he, too, stopped still at his bath and considered ripping the memory out of his minitapes.

He added Death.

But he knew he was lost, now. For better or worse, the water had closed over his head, and if he edited the memory now, he would seek it out again some day. For a moment, he wondered if that was precisely what he had done, countless times before.

He gave it up. It could wait—if he stayed sane.

At any rate, he knew how to get the little boy his dog, now.

He built a signal generator to cancel out the effect of the big one, purring implacably in its mountain shaft, sending out its eternal, unshieldable signal. He blanketed one room of his apartment with the canceling wave, and added six months to his age by staying in it for hours during the eighteen months it took to mate Ugly and raise the best pup, for the stimulating wave was the answer to sterility, too. Fetuses could not develop.

He cut himself from the Dilly crowd, what was left of it, and raised the pup. And it was more than six months he added to his age, for all that time he debated and weighed, and remembered.

And by the time he was ready, he still did not know what he was going to do about the greater problem. Still and all, he had a new dog for the boy.

He packed the canceling generator and the dog in his car, and drove back up the road he had come.

Finally, he knocked on Riker's door, the dog under one arm, the generator under the other.

Riker answered his knock and looked at him curiously.

"I'm . . . I'm Kester Fay, Mr. Riker," he said hesitating. "I've brought your boy that dog I promised."

Riker looked at the dog and the bulky generator under his arm, and Fay shifted his load awkwardly, the dangling vault interfering with his movements. Light as it was, the vault was a bulky thing. "Don't you remember me?"



Riker blinked thoughtfully, his forehead knotting. Then he shook his head. "No . . . no, I guess not, Mr. Fay." He looked suspiciously at Fay's clothes, which hadn't been changed in three days. Then he nodded.

"Uh . . . I'm sorry, mister, but I guess I must have edited it." He smiled in embarrassment. "Come to think of it, I've wondered if we didn't have a dog sometime. I hope it wasn't too important to you."

Fay looked at him. He found it impossible to think of anything to say. Finally, he shrugged.

"Well," he said, "your boy doesn't have a dog now, does he?"

Riker shook his head. "Nope. You know—it's a funny thing, what with the editing and everything, but he knows a kid with a dog, and sometimes he pesters the life out of me to get him one." Riker shrugged. "You know how kids are."

"Will you take this one?" He held out the squirming animal.

"Sure. Mighty grateful. But I guess we both know this won't work out too well." He reached out and took the dog.

"This one sure will," Fay said. He gave Riker the generator. "Just turn this on for a while in the same room with your son and the dog. It won't hurt anything, but the dog'll remember."

Riker looked at him skeptically.

"Try it," Fay said, but Riker's eyes were narrowing, and he gave Fay both the dog and the generator back.

"No, thanks," he said. "I'm not trying anything like that from a guy that comes out of nowhere in the middle of the night."

"Please, Mr. Riker. I promise—"

"Buddy, you're trespassing. I won't draw more than half a hectoyear if I slug you."

Fay's shoulders slumped. "All right," he sighed, and turned around. He heard Riker slam the heavy door behind him.

But as he trudged down the walk, his shoulders lifted, and his lips set in a line.

There has to be an end somewhere, he thought. Each thing has to end, or there will never be any room for beginnings. He turned around to be sure no one in the house was watching, and released the dog. He'd be found in the morning, and things might be different by then.

He climbed into the car and drove quickly away, leaving the dog behind. Somewhere outside of town, he threw the canceling generator outside, onto the concrete highway, and heard it smash. He unchained his memory vault, and threw it out, too.

There had to be an end. Even an end to starlit nights and the sound of a powerful motor. An end to the memory of sunset in the Piazza San Marco, and the sight of snow on Chamonix. An end to good whiskey. For him, there had to be an end—so that others could come after. He pointed the car toward the generator's location, and reflected that he had twenty or thirty years left, anyway.

He flexed his curiously light arm.



## *Afterword* *to*

### **“The End of Summer”**

ALGIS BUDRYS, one of the two best science fiction writers of the decade (the other was Alfred Bester), reports that “The End of Summer” was a try for *Star Short Novels*—the one-shot companion to Ballantine’s *Star short stories* series which included Sturgeon’s “To Here and the Easel,” Jessamyn West’s “Little Men,” and Lester del Rey’s “For I Am a Jealous People”—but which ended up as his first cover story for *Astounding* in late 1954. He has the Frank Kelly Freas cover painting, one of his proudest possessions.

“The End of Summer,” a wholly remarkable story by a precocious twenty-three-year-old, was reprinted only in one of Budrys’s own collections and has been out of print for a long time. Budrys (born in 1931) ascended rapidly to the top of the field as it was then constituted, published close to a hundred short stories, five or six novels, and capped off his decade and the fifties themselves with *Rogue Moon* (Gold Medal, 1959) which

many consider one of the five or six best novels in the field. Despite that, neither *Rogue Moon* nor its author achieved full critical or financial rewards, and for a concentration of reasons an exhausted Budrys turned in the early sixties to full-time editing at various men's publications and then to public relations. He virtually disappeared from science fiction for eight years, and when he reappeared (in *Galaxy* in 1967) it was as a book reviewer of considerable quality and bitterness; it was 1975 before he could be said to have resumed the writing of science fiction with any regularity. (A minor novel, *The Amsirs and the Iron Thorn*, appeared in 1965 and a novelette, "Eye of Crystal, Wall of Night," in *Galaxy* at about the same time.) His novel *Michaelmas* was published in 1977, others are in the works, and many short stories have appeared; Budrys, along with Fred Pohl, has come back long after the decade and resumed a major career. There is no third writer in that category; some major writers of the fifties continued throughout, but only these two of the myriad who stopped were able to return.

Any true history of science fiction or this critical decade in the field would have to deal in depth with Budrys, who was simultaneously the most emblematic and enigmatic figure of the fifties. Similarly, any literary biography of Budrys—who is worthy of one and may someday have it—would have to approach him in terms of the context in which he was compelled to work: a serious writer framing his output for the rather narrow commercial science fiction markets. Budrys, a brooding, eclectic intelligence, multilingual, the son of an exiled Lithuanian consul, had perhaps



the finest and farthest-ranging mind of his period; only occasionally—but then with stunning effect—was he able to use in science fiction something close to the range of his intellect.

Budrys can speak for himself better than can I—he remains the foremost critical intelligence of the field, now writing regularly for *F&SF*—and he does. He does.

B. N. M.





## *Try and Change the Past*

Fritz Leiber

NO, I WOULDN'T advise anyone to try to change the past, at least not his *personal* past, although changing the *general* past is my business. You see, I'm a Snake in the Change War. Don't back off—human beings, even Resurrected ones engaged in time-fighting, aren't built for outward wriggling and their poison is mostly psychological. "Snake" is slang for the soldiers on our side, like Hun or Reb or Ghibbelin. In the Change War we're trying to alter the past—and it's tricky, brutal work, believe me—at points all over the cosmos, anywhere and anywhen, so that history will be warped to make our side defeat the Spiders. But that's a much bigger story, the biggest in fact, and I'll leave it occupying several planets of microfilm and two asteroids of coded molecules in the files of the High Command.

Change one event in the past and you get a brand-new future? Erase the conquests of Alex-

ander by nudging a Neolithic pebble? Extirpate America by pulling up a shoot of Sumerian grain? Brother, that isn't the way it works at all! The space-time continuum's built of stubborn stuff and change is anything but a chain-reaction. Change the past and you start a wave of changes moving futurewards, but it damps out mighty fast. Haven't you ever heard of temporal reluctance, or of the Law of Conservation of Reality?

Here's a little story that will illustrate my point: This guy was fresh recruited, the Resurrection sweat still wet in his armpits, when he got the idea he'd use the time-traveling power to go back and make a couple of little changes in his past, so that his life would take a happier course and maybe, he thought, he wouldn't have to die and get mixed up with Snakes and Spiders at all. It was as if a new-enlisted feuding hillbilly soldier should light out with the high-power rifle they issued him to go back to his mountains and pick off his pet enemies.

Normally it couldn't ever have happened. Normally, to avoid just this sort of thing, he'd have been shipped straight off to some place a few thousand or million years distant from his point of enlistment and maybe a few light-years, too. But there was a local crisis in the Change War and a lot of routine operations got held up and one new recruit was simply forgotten.

Normally, too, he'd never have been left alone a moment in the Dispatching Room, never even have glimpsed the place except to be rushed through it on arrival and reshipment. But, as I say, there happened to be a crisis, the Snakes were shorthanded, and several soldiers were careless.



Afterwards two N.C.'s were busted because of what happened and a First Looney not only lost his commission but was transferred outside the galaxy and the era. But during the crisis this recruit I'm telling you about had the opportunity and more to fool around with forbidden things and try out his schemes.

He also had all the details on the last part of his life back in the real world, on his death and its consequences, to mull over and be tempted to change. This wasn't anybody's carelessness. The Snakes give every candidate that information as part of the recruiting pitch. They spot a death coming and the Resurrection Men go back and recruit the person from a point a few minutes or at most a few hours earlier. They explain in uncomfortable detail what's going to happen and wouldn't he rather take the oath and put on scales? I never heard of anybody turning down that offer. Then they lift him from his lifeline in the form of a Doubleganger and from then on, brother, he's a Snake.

So this guy had a clearer picture of his death than of the day he bought his first car, and a masterpiece of morbid irony it was. He was living in a classy penthouse that had belonged to a crazy uncle of his—it even had a midget astronomical observatory, unused for years—but he was stony broke, up to the top hair in debt and due to be dispossessed next day. He'd never had a real job, always lived off his rich relatives and his wife's, but now he was getting a little too mature for his stern dedication to a life of sponging to be cute. His charming personality, which had been his



only asset, was deader from overuse and abuse than he himself would be in a few hours. His crazy uncle would not have anything to do with him anymore. His wife was responsible for a lot of the wear and tear on his social-butterfly wings; she had hated him for years, had screamed at him morning to night the way you can only get away with in a penthouse, and was going batty herself. He'd been playing around with another woman, who'd just given him the gate, though he knew his wife would never believe that and would only add a scornful note to her screaming if she did.

It was a lousy evening, smack in the middle of an August heat wave. The Giants were playing a night game with Brooklyn. Two long-run musicals had closed. Wheat had hit a new high. There was a brush fire in California and a war scare in Iran. And tonight a meteor shower was due, according to an astronomical bulletin that had arrived in the morning mail addressed to his uncle—he generally dumped such stuff in the fireplace unopened, but today he had looked at it because he had nothing else to do, either more useful or more interesting.

The phone rang. It was a lawyer. His crazy uncle was dead and in the will there wasn't a word about an Asteroid Search Foundation. Every penny of the fortune went to the no-good nephew.

This same character finally hung up the phone, fighting off a tendency for his heart to spring giddily out of his chest and through the ceiling. Just then his wife came screeching out of the bedroom. She'd received a cute, commiserating, tell-all note from the other woman; she had a gun and announced that she was going to finish him off.



The sweltering atmosphere provided a good background for sardonic catastrophe. The french doors to the roof were open behind him but the air that drifted through was muggy as death. Unnoticed, a couple of meteors streaked faintly across the night sky.

Figuring it would sure dissuade her, he told her about the inheritance. She screamed that he'd just use the money to buy more other women—not an unreasonable prediction—and pulled the trigger.

The danger was minimal. She was at the other end of a big living room, her hand wasn't just shaking, she was waving the nickel-plated revolver as if it were a fan.

The bullet took him right between the eyes. He flopped down, deader than his hopes were before he got the phone call. He saw it happen because as a clincher the Resurrection Men brought him forward as a Doubleganger to witness it invisibly—also standard Snake procedure and not productive of time-complications, incidentally, since Doublegangers don't imprint on reality unless they want to.

They stuck around a bit. His wife looked at the body for a couple of seconds, went to her bedroom, blonded her graying hair by dousing it with two bottles of undiluted peroxide, put on a tarnished gold lamé evening gown and a bucket of makeup, went back to the living room, sat down at the piano, played "Country Gardens" and then shot herself, too.

So that was the little skit, the little double blackout, he had to mull over outside the empty and unguarded Dispatching Room, quite forgotten by its twice-depleted skeleton crew while



every available Snake in the sector was helping deal with the local crisis, which centered around the planet Alpha Centauri Four, two million years minus.

Naturally it didn't take him long to figure out that if he went back and gimmicked things so that the first blackout didn't occur, but the second still did, he would be sitting pretty back in the real world and able to devote his inheritance to fulfilling his wife's prediction and other pastimes. He didn't know much about Doublegangers yet and had it figured out that if he didn't die in the real world he'd have no trouble resuming his existence there—maybe it'd even happen automatically.

So this Snake—name kind of fits him, doesn't it?—crossed his fingers and slipped into the Dispatching Room. Dispatching is so simple a child could learn it in five minutes from studying the board. He went back to a point a couple of hours before the tragedy, carefully avoiding the spot where the Resurrection Men had lifted him from his lifeline. He found the revolver in a dresser drawer, unloaded it, checked to make sure there weren't any more cartridges around, and then went ahead a couple of hours, arriving just in time to see himself get the slug between the eyes same as before.

As soon as he got over his disappointment, he realized he'd learned something about Doublegangers he should have known all along, if his mind had been clicking. The bullets he'd lifted were Doublegangers, too; they had disappeared from the real world only at the point in space-time where he'd lifted them, and they had continued to



exist, as real as ever, in the earlier and later sections of their lifelines—with the result that the gun was loaded again by the time his wife had grabbed it up.

So this time he set the board so he'd arrive just a few minutes before the tragedy. He lifted the gun, bullets and all, and waited around to make sure it stayed lifted. He figured—rightly—that if he left this space-time sector the gun would reappear in the dresser drawer, and he didn't want his wife getting hold of any gun, even one with a broken lifeline. Afterwards—after his own death was averted, that is—he figured he'd put the gun back in his wife's hand.

Two things reassured him a lot, although he'd been expecting the one and hoping for the other: his wife didn't notice his presence as a Double-ganger and when she went to grab the gun she acted as if it weren't gone and held her right hand as if there were a gun in it. If he'd studied philosophy, he'd have realized he was witnessing a proof of Leibniz's Theory of Pre-established Harmony: that neither atoms nor human beings really affect each other, they just look as if they did.

But anyway he had no time for theories. Still holding the gun, he drifted out into the living room to get a box seat right next to Himself for the big act. Himself didn't notice him any more than his wife had.

His wife came out and spoke her piece same as ever. Himself cringed as if she still had the gun and started to babble about the inheritance, his wife sneered and made as if she were shooting Himself.

Sure enough, there was no shot this time, and no mysteriously appearing bullet hole—which was something he'd been afraid of. Himself just stood there dully while his wife made as if she were looking down at a dead body and went back to her bedroom.

He was pretty pleased: this time he actually had changed the past. Then Himself slowly glanced around at him, still with that dull look, and slowly came toward him. He was more pleased than ever because he figured now they'd melt together into one man and one lifeline again, and he'd be able to hurry out somewhere and establish an alibi, just to be on the safe side, while his wife suicided.

But it didn't quite happen that way. Himself's look changed from dull to desperate, he came up close . . . and suddenly grabbed the gun and quick as a wink put a thumb to the trigger and shot himself between the eyes. And flopped, same as ever.

Right there he was starting to learn a little—and it was an unpleasant shivery sort of learning—about the Law of Conservation of Reality. The four-dimensional space-time universe doesn't like to be changed, any more than it likes to lose or gain energy or matter. If it has to be changed, it'll adjust itself just enough to accept that change and no more. The Conservation of Reality is a sort of Law of Least Action, too. It doesn't matter how improbable the events involved in the adjustment are, just so long as they're possible at all and can be used to patch the established patterns. His death, at this point, was part of the established pattern. If he lived on instead of dying, billions of



other compensatory changes would have to be made, covering many years, perhaps centuries, before the old pattern could be reestablished, the snarled lifelines woven back into it—and the universe finally go on the same as if his wife had shot him on schedule.

This way the pattern was hardly affected at all. There were powder burns on his forehead that weren't there before, but there weren't any witnesses to the shooting in the first place, so the presence or absence of powder burns didn't matter. The gun was lying on the floor instead of being in his wife's hands, but he had the feeling that when the time came for her to die, she'd wake enough from the Pre-established Harmony trance to find it, just as Himself did.

So he'd learned a little about the Conservation of Reality. He also had learned a little about his own character, especially from Himself's last look and act. He'd got a hint that he had been trying to destroy himself for years by the way he'd lived, so that inherited fortune or accidental success couldn't save him, and if his wife hadn't shot him he'd have done it himself in any case. He'd got a hint that Himself hadn't merely been acting as an agent for a self-correcting universe when he grabbed the gun, he'd been acting on his own account, too—the universe, you know, operates by getting people to cooperate.

But although these ideas occurred to him, he didn't dwell on them, for he figured he'd had a partial success the second time. If he kept the gun away from Himself, if he dominated Himself, as it were, the melting-together would take place and everything else go forward as planned.



He had the dim realization that the universe, like a huge sleepy animal, knew what he was trying to do and was trying to thwart him. This feeling of opposition made him determined to outmaneuver the universe—not the first guy to yield to such a temptation, of course.

And up to a point his tactics worked. The third time he gimmicked the past, everything started to happen just as it did the second time. Himself dragged miserably over to him, looking for the gun, but he had it tucked away and was prepared to hold onto it. Encouragingly, Himself didn't grapple, the look of desperation changed to one of utter hopelessness, and Himself turned away from him and very slowly walked to the Fench doors and stood looking out into the sweating night. He figured Himself was just getting used to the idea of not dying. There wasn't a breath of air. A couple of meteors streaked across the sky. Then, mixed with the upseeping night sounds of the city, there was a low whirring whistle.

Himself shook a bit, as if he'd had a sudden chill. Then Himself turned around and slumped to the floor in one movement. Between his eyes was a black hole.

Then and there this Snake I'm telling you about decided never again to try and change the past, at least not his personal past. He'd had it, and he'd also acquired a healthy respect for a High Command able to change the past, albeit with difficulty. He scooted back to the Dispatching Room, where a sleepy and surprised Snake gave him a terrific chewing-out and confined him to quarters. The chewing-out didn't bother him too much—he'd acquired a certain fatalism about



things. A person's got to learn to accept reality as it is, you know—just as you'd best not be surprised at the way I disappear in a moment or two—I'm a Snake too, remember.

If a statistician is looking for an example of a highly improbable event, he can hardly pick a more vivid one than the chance of a man being hit by a meteorite. And, if he adds the condition that the meteorite hit him between the eyes so as to counterfeit the wound made by a .32 caliber bullet, the improbability becomes astronomical cubed. So how's a person going to outmaneuver a universe that finds it easier to drill a man through the head that way rather than postpone the date of his death?





## *Afterword* *to*

### **“Try and Change the Past”**

By 1958 science fiction had not only achieved full transition from its pulp origins to its new maturity, but had also reached and passed its fifties peak. On the whole, the work which appeared in the last two or three years of the decade was less distinguished than that which was done during the beginning. Too, as Barry Malzberg points out in his introductory essay, the magazine boom of the early fifties had pretty much come to an end; already extinct or moribund were *Beyond*, *Fantastic Universe*, *Future*, *Imagination*, *Infinity*, *Satellite*, *Venture*, and others of some stature. (The last of the “pure” science fiction and fantasy pulps—*Startling*, *Thrilling Wonder*, *Weird Tales*—were gone by 1954. All that remained in 1958 of the magazines which had flourished during “The Golden Years” of the thirties and forties were *Astounding* and *Amazing*, and they had undergone transformations in format and content.)

But this is not to say that work of high merit was seldom being published in the late fifties; just that the sheer quantity of memorable fiction had decreased. This variation by Fritz Leiber on the classic theme of time-travel-to-change-the-past is one such superior tale; Larry Janifer's "Hex," which follows, is another. Theodore Sturgeon's "The Man Who Lost the Sea" and "The Other Celia," James Gunn's "The Immortals," and Alfred Bester's "The Men Who Murdered Mohammed," also appeared between 1957 and 1960.

Compared to the outputs of other writers, Leiber, who was editor of *Science Digest* during the decade, did relatively little work in the fifties. Of his other short stories of the period, perhaps the most well-known and oft-anthologized is the 1950 "Coming Attraction"; this and others are included in his early Ballantine collection, *A Pail of Air*. His Hugo-winning novel, *The Big Time*, also appeared in 1958. But it was not until the sixties and seventies that the greater percentage of Leiber's best work was written and published: novels such as *The Wanderer*, *The Mind Spider*, *A Spectre is Haunting Texas*; short stories such as "The Beat Cluster," "Gonna Roll Them Bones," and "Ship of Shadows." He is the recipient of several Nebula and Hugo awards in science fiction and a Life Achievement award in the fantasy field, and is generally considered to be the past and present master of sword-and-sorcery and other types of fantasy.

B. P.



# *Hex*

Laurence M. Janifer

THE OFFICE wasn't very bright or sunny, but that didn't matter. In the first place, if Gloria really wanted sun, she could always get some by tuning in on a mind outside, someone walking the streets of downtown New York. And, in the second place, the weather wasn't important; what mattered was how you felt inside. Gloria took off her beret and crammed it into a drawer of her desk. She sat down, feeling perfectly ready for work, her bright eyes sparkling and her whole twenty-one-year-old body eager for the demands of the day.

It was ten minutes to nine in the morning.

On the desk was a mass of reports and folders. Gloria looked at them and sighed; the cleaning woman, she thought, must have upset everything again.

But neatness was the keystone of good, efficient work in any field. Gloria set to work rearranging

everything in a proper order. The job took her nearly twenty minutes and, by the time she was finished, the office was full.

Mr. Fredericksohn hadn't arrived yet, naturally. He always came in around nine-thirty. But all of the caseworkers were ready for the day's work. Gloria looked around the office at them, beaming. It was good to be able to help people and to know that what you were doing was right.

She remembered wondering how you could be sure you were right about somebody else, if you couldn't read minds. But, then, there were rules to go by, and all of the fine classes and textbooks that a social caseworker had to have. If you paid attention, and if you really wanted to help people, Gloria supposed, it was all right. Certainly everything in her own office seemed to run smoothly.

Not that she would ever do anything about another worker, no matter what. Gloria remembered what Mr. Greystone, a teacher of hers had said, a year or so before: "Never interfere with the case load of another worker. Your sole job is represented by your own case load."

That was good advice, Gloria thought. And, anyhow, her assistance didn't seem to be too badly needed, among the others. She had quite enough to do in taking care of her own clients.

And here she was, wasting time! She shook her head and breathed a little sigh, and began on the first folder.

Name: GIRONDE, JOSE R.

Name: Wladek, Mrs. Marie Posner. She was no fool. She knew about the reports they had to make, and the sheets covered with all the details of your



very own private life; she had seen them on a desk when she had come to keep her appointment. Mrs. Wladek was her name, and that was how the report would look, with her name all reversed in order right on the top. And underneath that there would be her address and her story, all that she had told the caseworkers, set right down in black and white for anybody at all to read.

When you were poor, you had no privacy, and that was the truth. Mrs. Wladek shook her head. A poor old woman, that was all that she was, and privacy was a luxury not to be asked for. Who said the United States was different from the old country?

Cossacks, she thought. In the old country, one still heard the old stories, the streets paved with gold and the food waiting for such as yourself; oh, the war had not changed that in the least. Now the Voice of America was heard in the old country—she had a letter, smuggled out, from her own second-cousin Marfa, telling her all about the Voice of America—and that was only another trap. They wanted to make you leave your own land and your own country, and come far away to America and to the United States, so that you would have no friends and you would be defenseless.

Then you could not help yourself. Then you had to do what they asked you, because there was no other way to eat. There were no friends to feed you dinners or to allow you room in a good house. No. There was only the caseworker with her reports that took the last bit of privacy away from an old woman, and left her with barely enough money to remain alive.



"Get a job," they said. "Tell your son to get a job. He is young and strong and healthy."

Certainly! But the United States is not a place in which to work. The United States will give you money. This fact she had from her uncle Bedrich, who had come to the new country years before, and who had written many letters back to his family before his death in an accident.

Should she, then, work? Should her own son, her own Rudi, be forced to work out his time of youth? Surely a little privacy was a small enough thing to surrender for freedom and ease?

But that they should ask for you to surrender it . . . Cossacks!

Mrs. Wladek stood up carefully—her old bones creaked, and she could feel them creaking. She looked around the tiny living room, covered with dust. One should have the money to hire a maid. But the caseworkers had never understood that. Young things, of course they knew nothing of the troubles facing an old woman.

An old woman needed a maid.

She laughed briefly to herself at the idea, and realized at the same time that she had been hiding her own thoughts from herself.

Today was her appointment day, and the new one would be there, blond and young and smiling at her with the innocent face. There was something wrong with the new one; she could see that. In the old country there were stories—

Are you, Marie Wladek, afraid of a young woman? Does your age count for nothing? Does your experience and knowledge count for nothing?

And yet, she had to admit to herself that she was afraid, and that she was afraid of giving a name to



her fear. Only a fool could mock at the stories told in the old country, and Mrs. Wladek knew of such a fool; he had died with mockery on his lips, but all had known what had killed him.

*Can you not battle a young woman, and win, Marie Wladek?*

And yet the young woman had something strange about her, and Mrs. Wladek remembered the old stories, and thought of witchcraft.

Who could fight witchcraft?

Even when the witch was a young girl without experience, and with an innocent face and blond hair—

Mrs. Wladek looked at the mantel clock she had brought with her across the ocean. It told perfect time; it was as good as everything from the old country. Here in America they had no such clocks. Here everything ran by electricity, and when you touched it there was a shock, which was unnatural.

The old clock told the time: nine-thirty. Appointment hour was approaching. Mrs. Wladek did not want to leave the house. She did not want to face this new caseworker.

But, all the same, one had to have money to live.

That they should force an old woman to travel across the city and to speak with a girl, by appointment, solely in order to get the money which should have been hers by right!

Cossacks! Monsters!

Name: GIRONDE, JOSE R.

Address: 1440 Hamilton Street

Borough: New York

Phone: None

Complaint: Client is over fifty, without work for

eight months—last worked in October—due to recurrent difficulty regarding back. Sole support wife and wife's sister. One child (Ramon, 27), living on West Coast. Preliminary inquiries fail to locate child.

Remarks: NPH. Examination needed. Is back injury chronic?

There was a great deal of paper work needed, Gloria realized. At first she hadn't liked the paper work at all, but she could see now how necessary it was. After all, everybody wasn't like her; the other workers, she knew, didn't have her particular talent, and they had to write things down for fear they'd forget.

Sometimes Gloria felt very sorry for the other caseworkers. But she knew they were doing their very best, and they were, after all, helping people. That was the only important thing: to help people, to make them better members of society.

Now, Jose Gironde's back injury was certainly chronic. Gloria tried to remember the medical term for it: it was something to do with a lordosis. She'd paid no attention to that, since she had been trying to fix up the back instead.

But now a doctor had to be called, and a thorough examination had to be given, all so that the records would show what Gloria knew already. A caseworker couldn't fill out a medical report; you had to be a doctor to do that.

And it didn't matter, Gloria knew, if you had all the information at your fingertips, and even knew more than the doctor. (Gloria could have cured Jose Gironde's back easily; a doctor couldn't do that.) Examination was the doctor's job.

It was like being a member of a team, Gloria thought.



That felt good.

She got out the list of doctors which all the caseworkers used, and followed it down with her finger. Dr. Willmarth was free, she knew, on Thursday morning at eleven.

Luckily, Jose Gironde was free at the same hour. She made a note to call the doctor and make an appointment, and to clear the appointment with Jose Gironde, and made a duplicate note on the report sheet.

That would take care of that.

The paper work, after all, wasn't so very hard. All she had to do now was to make the actual calls, and then wait for the written result of the examination. When that had come through, she would be able to recommend Jose Gironde for permanent relief, as was obviously indicated in his case.

The back injury could not be corrected by medical science. And if Gloria were to correct it—

"Your job as a caseworker is clearly defined," a teacher had said. "Meddling in another's province, without the permission of your supervisor, is always uncalled-for."

In other words, Gloria thought, the status quo has to be kept. And that, too, made sense when you thought about it.

She looked up to see Harold Meedy smiling across the room at her. She smiled back, very briefly, and went back to her own work.

"Interpersonal relationships within the office framework," a teacher—Mr. Greystone?—had said, "are fraught with danger, and should be handled with the greatest care."

If Harold Meedy wanted to get acquainted with her, that was his affair. She didn't feel that she could conscientiously encourage him in the

slightest. Not only was he a fellow worker, which made the whole situation more complicated than it would ordinarily have been, but he was a small, pudgy man with pimples and an earnest expression. He looked as if he would be a bore, and a difficult person to get rid of.

He was.

Gloria just didn't think he was exactly her type.

And if he went on trying, she thought regretfully, she would be forced to do something about it. Of course, Meedy would never know the difference, but even so, Gloria didn't like to do any unnecessary work. Changing someone's mind was a delicate job, and a responsible one, not to be undertaken for a small motive.

Even if the person never knew his mind had been changed at all—

Mrs. Wladek, in her apartment, shrugged on an old coat and compressed her lips with weariness. Appointment time was near, and a person had to be punctual.

Even when a person was going to see a young girl who was strange and frightening, and who might do—

Well, don't be a foolish old woman, Mrs. Wladek told herself. Rudi would have told her that. But Rudi was out somewhere, with a girl or with some of his friends, like a good American boy.

Don't be a foolish old woman, Rudi would have said.

But Mrs. Wladek was frightened.

It was nearly ten o'clock, Gloria noticed. She



did not feel in the least tired; she was still eager and ready for work. She decided she had time for one more folder before the first of her appointments arrived.

She reached out for it and saw Mr. Fredericksohn coming in the door. He smiled at her, a tall, white-haired man with a square face, who radiated enormous efficiency and a certain distant friendliness.

She did not say hello, but merely nodded. Mr. Fredericksohn like to take the initiative himself, in all relationships.

"How are we doing today?" he said, peering over her shoulder.

"Fine," she said happily. "Just fine."

Mr. Fredericksohn grunted. "I see Mrs. Wladek's on your schedule today."

"That's right," she said.

"Just do what you can," he said. "You've seen her before, haven't you?"

She nodded. "Once. Last week."

"She's a—problem," he said. Mr. Fredericksohn was always a little chary of saying anything that might be construed as derogatory to a client, even in the privacy of professional conversation.

"I'm sure we'll be able to work things out," Gloria said.

"Well," Mr. Fredericksohn said, and paused. Then he nodded. "You do what you can," he said. His voice sounded doubtful.

She beamed up at him. "I certainly will," she said with enthusiasm.

Mr. Fredericksohn nodded and muttered something, and went on by.

Gloria smiled. Oh, she was going to show Mr. Fredericksohn, all right! He just wasn't sure she could handle Mrs. Wladek—and the old woman certainly did represent a problem. Her folder was full of notations by caseworker after caseworker. But Gloria's smile broadened just a trifle.

My goodness, everything was going to be all right. She was sure Mr. Fredericksohn would be happy with her work.

Though the important thing wasn't her own success, but the people themselves. If you could help them to be bright, and happy, and successful, then that was the best job in the world.

And she could.

My goodness, yes.

Mrs. Wladek looked at the door for a long time without opening it. She didn't want to go in—certainly not. But there was her appointment, and money was needed; she had no choice. The cosacks of America had forced her to this pass, and she was an old woman; what could she do? Fight them?

One had to give in.

She reached for the doorknob and turned it and opened the door.

There were all the desks, and the men and women working. And near the far corner, on the left, the girl sat studying a sheet of paper. Mrs. Wladek looked at the blond hair and the pretty face and the slight figure, and shivered.

But she had no choice; she went across the room and when she had almost reached the desk the girl said: "Good morning, Mrs. Wladek."

How had she known? Mrs. Wladek had made



no sound in walking to the desk. Yet the girl had known someone was there, and who that someone was, before her head had been raised. Truly, the girl was frightening.

Mrs. Wladek eased herself, feeling her bones creak, into a chair at the side of the desk. She said nothing.

"How are things going?" the girl said in her pleasant smooth voice.

"I am fine," Mrs. Wladek said deliberately. She did not inquire about the girl's health. That would show her; that impoliteness would show her what an old woman thought of her!

"That's good," the girl said. "That's very good. And how is Rudi?"

"Rudi is my son," Mrs. Wladek said.

"I know that," the girl said, and smiled. "We met last week, don't you remember?"

"I remember you," Mrs. Wladek said. Then, grudgingly, she added: "Rudi is the same. He is fine."

"That's fine," the girl said. "And has he found a job yet?"

Here it was necessary to lie, Mrs. Wladek knew. One could not say that Rudi did not look for work. One had to say: "Work is difficult to find. He tries, but there is no job."

"And how about yourself?" the girl said.

"I am an old woman," Mrs. Wladek said. "Who would hire an old woman?"

The girl nodded. "It's been a long time since your husband died," she said.

"In an accident with an automobile," Mrs. Wladek said. "I remember that time. It is sad to think of."

"And Rudi hasn't found any work in all that time," the girl said.

"He looks hard," Mrs. Wladek said earnestly. This was a game that had to be played, she knew, a conversation that started and finished each time she came for an appointment. "He looks but work is difficult to find," she said.

"I understand," the girl said. "But I'm sure you and Rudi will both find work soon." She paused and her eyes closed.

Mrs. Wladek felt something happen.

It was . . . she felt . . . a stirring, a changing—

She stood up suddenly and the chair clattered, balanced and rocked back upright. "What are you doing?"

"Doing?" the girl said.

"I go to look for work," Mrs. Wladek said. "You make me want to look for work!"

"That's fine, Mrs. Wladek," the girl said. "That's just fine."

"But I want to look for work!" Mrs. Wladek said, horrified. "What do you do to me?"

The girl only smiled.

Mrs. Wladek spun and ran for the door, her eyes wide; but she collided with a desk and backed off, and then managed to find her way. The door banged behind her.

Gloria sat at her desk smiling, filled with satisfaction. Of course, a reaction like Mrs. Wladek's was only to be expected, but when it was over she would be looking for work.

Gloria released the little doll she had held throughout the interview and let it fall back, out of sight, into her desk drawer. The doll was shaped into a vague female likeness.

She didn't need it now.



Her work was done.

Mrs. Wladek was going to look for work, and that would adjust her to the world. She would be a functioning member of society now, and it would do her a lot of good. Rudi, too—Gloria considered Rudi. There was another doll in the drawer, a male, and after a few seconds she put her hand in the drawer and fished around until she had found it.

She turned it slowly, feeling for the son, until at last she had made contact.

There.

He was talking with some friends, it would not be hard. She concentrated, and at the same time she heard him talking:

“So look, here’s the way I see it. We got the Cobras on our necks, we got to get rid of them, right?”

Someone said: “Right, Rudi.”

“So if we start a little rumble, very quiet so the cops don’t figure what’s going on, then we—”

A silence.

Someone said: “What’s wrong, Rudi?”

“I don’t know. Something. What am I doing just standing here?”

And someone said: “What do you mean?”

“I mean I ought to be out getting a job, man. Earning some bread for the old lady. Got to have money, got to have a job.”

Someone said: “Hey, Rudi. Wait. What’s the hurry?”

And Rudi had gone.

Gloria dropped the doll and closed the drawer, and sat back, smiling gently. It was wonderful to be able to help people.

It was just wonderful.

*Find work. Find a job.*

*Go to the employment agency.*

*Start looking for work, right now.*

*Get a job.*

*It will be nice to have a steady job.*

*Nice—*

Somehow, Mrs. Wladek fought off the voices in her mind. It was so easy to succumb to them and to drift into the terrible things they wanted. Mrs. Wladek did not want them at all.

*A job, indeed!*

But it took effort, all the same, to concentrate on herself instead of the work, the job, the employment agency. It took effort to sit down on a bench in the park, near the building where the case-workers were, and plan out the next step.

A witch, certainly. The girl was a witch and she had put a hex on Mrs. Wladek, and that hex had to be removed.

*How?*

Mrs. Wladek thought first of the old woman in the store.

Certainly a gypsy woman would be able to take off a hex. Mrs. Wladek remembered gypsies from the old country, laughing people with the strange gift, witches themselves but always available for a price—

*The gypsy woman.*

Mrs. Wladek stood up and began to walk toward the park's exit. She forced her legs to move, creaking, one step at a time, thinking to herself: *The gypsy woman, the gypsy woman, the gypsy woman*—and trying to ignore the voices in her head that went on and on:

*It would be good to find a job.*



Go right away to the employment agency.  
Right away—

There were those who laughed—Marya Proderenska thought—and there would always be those who laughed, but that did not injure her; for scoffers she felt only a vast contempt. Had she not been shown in a dream that the power was hers? Had not each of her husbands, even the third who had contracted the fever and died with great suddenness in three weeks, admitted to her that she had a power beyond that of any normal woman? It was the power of vision and movement, the power of spell and incantation.

The others called it magic, though no gypsy would call it so.

Marya Proderenska sat quietly in the back room of the little shop and waited. A woman would come; she knew that, and the knowledge was another piece of her power, and a proof of it. Farther she could not see, but in the cloud of the future the woman was clear.

(What power Marya Proderenska had, a blond social worker had, too, and other people; she had never been able to clear her mind of her own superstitions enough to train the power or work very effectively with it. The power was sufficient for her.)

Marya Proderenska sighed. The power demanded its own responsibilities. She could not marry outside the clan into which she had been born. She could not be seen on certain days of every month. During those days many foods were forbidden her.

Thus the power worked, and thus she lived.

The woman would bring money for her, Marya knew. So she sat in the back of the shop and waited, and sighed, until the front door sighed open and Marie Wladek called: "Old woman, old woman!"

"Do you call me?" Marya said in her proud baritone.

"I call you, I call the gypsy woman."

Marya stood up and smoothed her old dress over the big-boned frame all of her husbands had admired. "Then come to me," she called.

Marie Wladek crept into the room, her eyes saucers of awe. To speak of witches was all very well, and a fresh-faced girl could give one fright; but here was the authority and power of witchcraft, in this woman with the fuzz of hair on her lip and the great trumpeting voice.

"I come for help," Mrs. Wladek said.

"I know why you have come," Marya Proderenska said. "You have a great trouble."

Mrs. Wladek nodded. "I am bewitched. A witch has placed a hex upon me, and I come to you to remove it."

There was a little silence. Then Marya Proderenska said: "The powers will not do work without payment."

Mrs. Wladek dug into her ancient beaded purse and found a crumpled dollar bill. She handed it over and the gypsy woman smiled and ducked her head.

"It is enough," she said.

Mrs. Wladek said: "Then you will help me?"

"I will help you," the gypsy woman said. "Tell me of this curse upon you."

"There is a voice in my mind," Mrs. Wladek



said. "The voice tells me—even now it continues—to go to an employment agency, to accept work . . . and the voice is not of my making."

"Whose voice is this?" the gypsy woman said.

"It is my own voice," Mrs. Wladek said. "The voice is my own, but I did not tell it to speak. Inside my own head, I can hear my own voice as if someone else put it there."

"Ah," the gypsy woman said. "And who is the witch who has put this curse upon you?"

Mrs. Wladek sighed. "At the office of the social workers, there is one, a young woman. She has done this to me."

Marya Proderenska nodded. Her eyes closed.

Mrs. Wladek stared at the still figure without moving for a minute. Time stretched endlessly. The room was very quiet; Mrs. Wladek heard the continuing voice in her mind and felt fear.

Another minute ticked by.

At last the gypsy woman opened her eyes. "It is a strong curse," she said in a distant voice. "But I have erased it for you. I have taken the hex from you. Is it not so?"

"Taken the hex—" Mrs. Wladek shook her head. "Then why do I still hear the voice?"

"You still hear it?" The gypsy woman muttered under her breath. "Come back tomorrow. We work again."

"Tomorrow is a long time."

The gypsy woman closed her eyes for a second. "All right," she said, and snapped them open. "Four o'clock this afternoon."

"I will be here."

"It is a strong curse."

"You will help me," Mrs. Wladek said.

"I will help you," Marya Proderenska said.

But, after the old woman had left, Marya Proderenska sat alone and her face was troubled. The strength of the curse—she had felt it herself—was enormous. She did not know of any magician who had such power.

She listed over the members of her own clan in her mind, and became satisfied that none she knew was responsible. And yet, the strength of the curse argued real power; was it possible that a power existed within the city, and she did not know of it? Marya felt a cold wind on her back, the wind of fear.

Such a power might do—anything.

And yet it was being used to coerce one useless old woman into taking a job!

Marya Proderenska lay flat on the floor, her arms outstretched. Thus one might gather the vital energies. Four o'clock was not many hours distant, and by four o'clock she would need all of the energy she could summon.

She did not allow herself to become doubtful about the outcome.

And yet she was afraid.

Gloria smiled understandingly at the woman who sat across the desk.

"I understand, Mrs. Francis," she said.

"It's not that Tom's a bad boy, you know," the woman said. "But he's—easily led. That's the only thing."

"Of course," Gloria said. She looked at the middle-aged woman, wearing a gray suit that did not fit her overweight frame, and a silly little



white hat. "I'm sure everything's going to be all right," she said.

Mrs. Francis gave a little gasp. "Oh, I hope so," she said. "Tom doesn't mean to cause any trouble. He just doesn't understand—"

Gloria went over the report sheets mentally. Tom didn't mean to cause any trouble, but he had been involved in a gang war or two—nothing in the way of Thompson submachine guns, of course, or mortars. Just a few pistols and zip-guns and rocks and broken bottles.

Tom hadn't been killed yet. That was, Gloria thought sadly, only a matter of time. He hadn't killed anybody yet, either—but he'd come close. Tom had seen the inside of a jail or two a lot more recently than he'd seen the inside of a classroom.

Tom was easily led.

Sure.

Well, Gloria thought, the problem was to lead him into something more productive and satisfying than the gangs of New York. And that didn't seem to be too hard.

Of course, she had very little practice as yet. The theoretical knowledge she'd been able to dig up in college was mostly on the magic and superstition shelves of the library—and, while she got full credit in her minor, anthropology, for the research she'd done, a great deal of it just wasn't any practical help.

Not if you were a witch—or what passed for one.

"You see what I mean, don't you?" Mrs. Francis said.

"Of course I do," Gloria said, and gave the woman her most reassuring smile. "I'm sure

something can be done. Do you know where your boy is now?"

Mrs. Francis nodded, birdlike. "He's home now. I think he's sleeping. He usually doesn't wake up until after noon."

"I see." Gloria hesitated a moment. "Can you describe him for me?"

"Describe him?"

"That's right," Gloria said. "You see, the somatotypes have, we've discovered, a great influence on mental and emotional makeup."

She didn't feel right, lying to the woman—but chances were that what she'd said didn't make any sense to Mrs. Francis and, in any case, Gloria could hardly tell her the real reason she wanted a description.

It would aid in making the doll she needed.

"He's about six feet tall," Mrs. Francis said, "but he's very thin, and sometimes I worry about that. I try to give him the best nourishment I know how, but he—"

"What color is his hair?" Gloria interrupted.

"Oh," Mrs. Francis said. "Brown. And brown eyes. Really nice eyes; they're his best feature; everybody says so."

"Any distinguishing marks, or anything unusual about him?"

"He has a scar now, on his left arm just below the elbow, but he got that in a fight with these boys—"

"All right," Gloria said. "Thank you very much."

"What are you going to do?" Mrs. Francis said. "You're not going to have him arrested or any-



thing, are you? Because he's not a bad boy, you know that. He's only—"

"Easily led," Gloria finished. "Of course. There won't be any need for arrest, or for anything as drastic as that. You just go home now, and don't worry. I'm sure everything's going to be all right."

"I only want to help my boy," Mrs. Francis said.

"Of course you do," Gloria said. "I want to help him, too."

Mrs. Francis stood up and swallowed hard. "I appreciate that," she said.

"It's my job, that's all," Gloria said, feeling unaccountably shy. As the woman left, she thought about that embarrassment and finally decided that she felt she had no right to be complimented. She was doing a job; it needed to be done; that was all.

True, she had special talents for the job—but Mrs. Francis didn't know that, and she hadn't made the talents anyhow, but been born with them.

Congratulations?

Don't be silly.

As a matter of fact, Gloria thought, she deserved a good talking-to. She hadn't had enough experience, and that was the simple truth. It was all very well to work on a boy like Rudi, or another one like Tom Francis, when they didn't have any idea who you were or even that you were trying to do something. That was easy.

But a woman like Mrs. Wladek—

She was suspicious from the start, and Gloria thought that perhaps she shouldn't have done anything. But it was obvious that the woman

needed help to become a functioning member of society.

The only trouble was that Gloria hadn't been quite expert enough. Oh, given enough time, the command would work, and eventually become part of the personality. But, because Mrs. Wladek had been afraid and a little forewarned, she'd been able to fight off the command a little.

*Practice, Gloria told herself, makes perfect.* And it wasn't her fault that she couldn't do any better. Next time, she'd have a little more practice and she'd be able to do a clearer and more complete job.

And, in the meantime, there was no real harm done. Mrs. Wladek would come round, before long, and then everything would be all right.

Why, after all, there was Rudi, too. And Rudi undoubtedly had a job by now, or at least a good chance of one through an employment agency.

There was no reason to be depressed.

Her son was waiting for her when she arrived at her home once more. Mrs. Wladek looked at the boy with relief and some suspicion. It was not natural for Rudi to be at home during such an hour; he was out with his friends through the day, and this was good for a boy.

"Ma," Rudi said, "guess what?"

"You are in trouble," Mrs. Wladek said at once, in a heavy voice.

"Trouble? I got no troubles, Ma," Rudi said. He stood before her in the dusty living room, self-assured and proud, and it came to Mrs. Wladek all at once that her boy was a man.

"What is it?" she demanded. "Tell me at once."



"Sure I will, Ma," Rudi said. "I got a job. I start tomorrow. In an office, wrapping things. The mail room, they call it."

Silence descended on the little room.

"Ma," Rudi said at last. "Ma, what's wrong?"

"Wrong?" Mrs. Wladek said. "What should be wrong? Nothing at all is wrong. You have a job, very well, you have a job."

"You're not happy about it, Ma?"

Mrs. Wladek gave a short bark. "Happy? Indeed I should be happy? My son goes to work, like a dog, and I should be—" She paused and gasped suddenly. "Why did you go to work?"

"You mean why did I get a job, Ma?" Rudi said. "Listen, let's have supper and we'll talk about it, huh?"

"Supper?" Mrs. Wladek snorted. "Supper we will have when I find out what I need to know. Not before."

"But I'm hungry, Ma, and . . . oh, all right." Rudi sat down on the old brown couch and sighed. "I just thought it would be a good idea to get a job, bring some bread into the house, you know? So I went down to the agency, and they had this application waiting, and I went down and got the job, and I start tomorrow. That's all. Now let's eat."

"You got the idea to have a job?" Mrs. Wladek said. "Fine. Fine. Just fine. And when did you get this idea?"

"I don't know," Rudi said, and shrugged. "Sometime. This morning, maybe. Look, what difference does it make? I thought you'd like the idea, Ma. Some more dough coming in . . . you know."

"This morning." Mrs. Wladek raised clenched fists over her head. "Cossacks!" she screamed. "Monsters! Witches!"

Lunchtime.

Gloria looked up and smiled sweetly and distantly as Harold Meedy appeared at her desk. "Got any special place to go?" he said.

"As a matter of fact—" she began, but he was too quick for her.

"It's always 'as a matter of fact,' " he said. "What's the matter—you got another boy friend or something? You don't like poor Harold? Look, Gloria, if you want to avoid me, then you go ahead and avoid me. But—"

"It's nothing like that," Gloria said.

"So come on," Harold said. "Listen, I'm really a sweet guy when you get to know me. You'd like me. Sure you would."

"I'm sure," Gloria said. "But I really do have something to take care of."

"Can't you take care of it later?"

She shook her head.

"Well . . . all right, if you want me to grow up all frustrated." He grinned at her and moved away.

When they were all gone, and only Mr. Fredericksohn remained in his private office, behind the closed door, Gloria opened a drawer of her desk and took out a piece of modeling clay a little bigger than her fist. Working without haste, and never bothering to look up she made a doll in the shape of a tall, thin boy.

The voodoo sects in Haiti used hair or fingernail parings from the subject, Gloria knew; she had learned that in her college research, but she



had known about the doll long before. Hair and fingernail parings: what superstition! And it wasn't as if you really needed the doll; if necessary, you could get along very well without it. But it was a help; it made things easier; and why not?

She tried to picture Tom Francis. His mother's description of him had been pretty vague, but Gloria found she could locate him at his house; she turned the doll until she had the feeling of contact, and then—

There.

It didn't take long, actually, not once you had your subject located. Tom hadn't really been a hard case; his juvenile delinquency, Gloria was quite sure, was a thing of the past. He'd be back in school as soon as the details could be worked out between Mrs. Francis and the Board of Education, and that would take care of that.

With a satisfied smile, she put the doll away in her drawer. She'd mash it back into clay later in the afternoon; that would enable her to use the same piece over and over again.

Clay cost money, and a caseworker's salary wasn't large. Gloria could not see how she could put the cost of the clay down on a special requisition, anyhow; she had to pay for it herself, and so she was very careful and saving with it.

After she'd put the Tom doll away with the Rudi doll, making a mental note to take care of both of them before she left for the day, she fished out her beret and put it on and went out for a quick lunch.

It was just after two o'clock when Mr. Gerne

came in. The others were used to his periodic arrivals, of course, and Gloria had never felt any fear of the director. He didn't work in the same office, but elsewhere in the building, and once a week he made a habit of touring the various social-work agencies under his direction.

It kept the workers on their toes, Gloria imagined: the actual sight of the boss's boss would do that. Mr. Gerne never smiled; he was a small, thin-lipped man with white skin and very little hair. He stood in the outer office, peering round, for a few minutes, and then, nodding his head slowly, he went on and knocked at Mr. Fredericksohn's door.

"Who's there?" Mr. Fredericksohn called from inside.

"Mr. Gerne," said Mr. Gerne. There was a little pause, and then Mr. Fredericksohn said:

"Ah. Come in."

The door opened and shut and Mr. Gerne was invisible.

Gloria picked up a folder and pretended to concentrate on it. Of course, she could hear what was happening in the private office perfectly well. She remembered studying medieval witchcraft and thought suddenly of astral bodies.

But that had been a guess some distance from the truth.

The projection of the sense of hearing was such a simple thing, really; why did people have to complicate it with all this talk about witches and the soul—she was reminded of Mrs. Wladek but put the woman out of her mind. Mr. Gerne was talking.



"... For instance, the new girl—what's her name?"

"Gloria Scott," Mr. Fredericksohn's voice said. "Yes?"

"What's she like?" Mr. Gerne's voice said. "I don't know her personally—of course I've seen her there in the office, and she seems like a friendly, pretty girl. But you deal with her every day—"

"Very nice," Mr. Fredericksohn said. "Pleasant and easy to work with. A good type. Now, you take her record—"

"That's what I meant," Mr. Gerne said. "A record like that—it's just not possible. There isn't any chance she's faking it?"

After a little silence Mr. Fredericksohn said: "No chance at all. I've had follow-ups on a random selection of her cases—standard practice for a newcomer. Of course, she doesn't know about any of that."

"Of course. And?"

"No fakes," Mr. Fredericksohn said. "And don't tell me it's hard to believe. I know perfectly well it's hard to believe."

"No returns," Mr. Gerne said. "Not a single return in over a month."

"Except the old woman," Mr. Fredericksohn said. "Mrs. Wladek."

Gloria turned a page in the report she was holding, without taking her attention from the conversation in the private room.

It was always helpful to know the kind of thing people said about you, as well as what they thought. It gave you more facts to work with, and

made you more efficient and better able to work at your chosen profession.

Mr. Gerne was saying: "You can discount Mrs. Wladek. That one's a trouble-spot."

"Always has been," Mr. Fredericksohn said.

"All right, then discount her," Mr. Gerne said. "Forget about her. And—outside of that one case—there hasn't been a repeat."

"Some of the clients have died," Mr. Fredericksohn said.

Mr. Gerne waited a second. Then he said: "A little higher percentage than normal. So?"

"I mean, that's a reason for some of the non-repeats."

"And the others?" Mr. Gerne paused a minute and then went on. "You can't discount the girl's record like that."

"I wasn't trying to," Mr. Fredericksohn said mildly. "I was only pointing out—"

"Let those go," Mr. Gerne said. "Obviously she had no control over that sort of thing. Unless you think she went out and killed them?"

"Of course not," Mr. Fredericksohn said.

"And outside of that, then—no repeats. The girl's a wonder."

"Certainly," Mr. Fredericksohn said. "Let's see how long it keeps up, that's all."

Mr. Gerne said: "Pessimist. All right, we'll drop the subject for now. Anyway, I did want to talk to you about the progress reports we've been getting from Frazier's office. It seems to me—"

Gloria broke the connection. Frazier, a supervisor for another office, didn't interest her; she only wanted to hear what the conversation about herself would be like. Well, now she knew.



And, thankfully, no one suspected a thing. Why, the subject had been brought up, right in the open, and dropped without a word or a thought.

"Unless you think she went out and killed them."

Gloria didn't smile. The idea was not funny. Sometimes you had to do something like that—but the necessity didn't make it pleasant.

The trouble was that you couldn't always cure something by a simple projection into the mind. Sometimes you ran into a compulsion that was really deeply buried.

If the compulsion was a big one, and went back far into childhood, Gloria couldn't do anything directly about it. Sometimes it was possible to work around, and, of course, you did that when you could. The important thing was society, but you salvaged the individual wherever possible.

Where it wasn't possible—

Well, here's a man who has a compulsion to get drunk. And, when drunk, he's got to pick fights. Maybe he hasn't killed anybody in a fight yet—but someday he will. He's got the strength and, under the influence of sufficient alcohol, he's got no inhibitions about using it.

None.

You can let the man live, and by doing that kill an unknown number of other people. At the least, keeping your hands and your mind off the compulsive drinker-fighter will serve to injure others—how many others, and how badly, you can't tell.

There are times when you've got to take an individual life in your hands.

And yet, because you can't always be sure—Gloria's "talents" could kill out of hand, she was sure. But she didn't use them that way. Instead, she simply projected a new compulsion into the mind of her subject.

The next time he got drunk and wanted to start a fight, he wanted to do something else, too.

For instance: walk along the edges of roofs.

The original compulsion had been added to, and turned into a compulsion toward suicide; that was what it amounted to.

Gloria didn't like doing it, and she was always glad when it wasn't necessary. But there was a dark side to everything—even, she thought, helping people.

She told herself grimly that it had to be done.

And then she returned to her work.

Mrs. Wladek pounded on the door of the gypsy's store a few minutes before four. Her face was white and her lips set in a thin line; she breathed with difficulty and with every move she made she could feel her old bones creak.

It was a shame what was being done to an old woman.

But did they care? Did any of them care?

Mrs. Wladek gave a little snort that was half laughter and half self-pity. She pounded on the door again and dropped her arm, feeling old and tired and nearly helpless.

But she had to fight on.

There was a limit to what an old woman could be expected to stand. They would learn, all of them, what—

The door opened.



Marya Proderenska said: "Yes? You are early."

"I am in a hurry. Terrible things have occurred."

The gypsy woman sighed and stepped aside. "Come in, then," she said, and Mrs. Wladek entered slowly, peering round the front room.

"Come in the back," the gypsy woman said. "I have been preparing to help you. But more is required."

It was Mrs. Wladek's turn to sigh. She reached into her purse and found a fifty-cent piece, which she handed over very slowly.

"More is required," the gypsy woman said, looking at the coin in her hand as if, Mrs. Wladek thought, it was less than a penny. Did not the woman realize that fifty cents was a great deal of money for a poor old woman?

No one had any pity any more.

She handed over another fifty cents and the gypsy woman nodded sadly, pocketed the money and led the way to the back room.

"You will help me now?" Mrs. Wladek said.

"I will try."

The room was silent as the gypsy woman brought all her knowledge and experience into play. Finally she looked at Mrs. Wladek and said: "A very powerful curse has been put upon you. I can't help you."

"The Church will help me!" Mrs. Wladek screamed. "They have the power to exorcise—"

"Do not speak to me of churches," the gypsy woman shouted.

Mrs. Wladek shook her head. "You, who steal my money, who steal the bread from my old mouth without pity—"

"A woman must live," Marya Proderenska said, with great dignity.

The housekeeper had said Father Seador was at supper. This did not make a difference. Mrs. Wladek's problem was certainly serious enough to interfere with any man's supper. Father Seador was overweight in any case; should he miss the entire meal, it would not do him any harm. Marie Wladek had a problem, and a serious one; let him miss his supper. It was his job to help people.

But Father Seador would certainly not be in the best of moods.

He was not.

He arrived with his face set in firm lines of disapproval. Mrs. Wladek got up from her chair and curtsied toward him, being very careful of her old bones. He nodded.

"Rudi in trouble again?" he said at once, taking a chair.

Mrs. Wladek sat herself down slowly. When she was settled, she looked over at the middle-aged man. "Rudi has a job."

"A job? A job?" Father Seador blinked. "That's fine. That's certainly good news."

"So you think," Mrs. Wladek said crisply.

"Well, of course it's good news," Father Seador said. "Responsibility . . . steady income . . . Mrs. Wladek, I'm sure this has made you very happy, but if you'll pardon me." Father Seador stood up. "I'm in the middle of—"

"Wait," Mrs. Wladek said. "This is not what I have come to talk to you about. It is why he has taken a job. It is why I will be taking a job."



"You?" Father Seador seemed incapable of speech. "Well, I—"

"I am bewitched," Mrs. Wladek said. "A curse is upon me."

"A curse? Well—" Father Seador stopped and cleared his throat. He sat down again. He blinked. At last he said: "What's wrong Mrs. Wladek?"

"I have told you," she said. "A curse. A curse. I want you to exorcise this witch that has put on me a hex."

"Exorcise? Curse?" Father Seador coughed. "I'm sure you must be mistaken, or—"

"Mistaken? I am not mistaken. I tell you there is a curse upon me."

The parlor was very quiet for a long time. At last Father Seador said: "If you really believe you've been hexed, you'd better give me all the details. When did you feel this . . . this curse put upon you?"

"This morning," Mrs. Wladek said.

"And what kind of curse is this? I mean, what effect has it had?"

Mrs. Wladek's voice was as hard as iron. "It has made my son take a job. It has made me want to look for a job. In time, I will not be able to fight the curse, and I will take a job. And then—"

"I don't see anything wrong about that," Father Seador said mildly.

"You see nothing wrong in a poor old woman being forced to work? In a boy forced to grind out his youth among package-wrappers? You see nothing wrong in this?"

"Well, I . . . we all have to work."

"Here?" Mrs. Wladek said with astonishment. "Here in America, you believe that? It is not so. My own uncle Bedrich has told me years ago it is not so. Do you dispute the word of my own uncle Bedrich?"

"My good woman," said Father Seador, "look around you . . . your friends, your neighbors—"

"Let us say no more about it," Mrs. Wladek interrupted. "There is a curse upon me and I have called on you to remove this curse."

"How do you know this is a curse? Our minds do change, you know, and they do strange things—"

"I have been told," Mrs. Wladek said.

"You've been told? By whom?"

Mrs. Wladek drew herself up in the chair. "By Marya Proderenska, the gypsy fortune teller. She knows that—"

"A gypsy? You consulted a fortune teller?"

"I did."

"Mrs. Wladek, do you know what you are saying . . . what you have done? Don't you realize you have committed a sin against—"

But he was speaking to empty air. Marie Wladek was gone.

Gloria looked up at the little clock and sighed briefly. Five o'clock. Another day gone already.

It was a shame, in a way, that time passed so quickly. Gloria didn't feel the least bit tired. After all, she had spent the day in helping people, and that was what made life worthwhile.

But it was quitting time. Staying late would give her the reputation of an eager beaver, and that would make her unpopular. Not that she



cared for popularity for its own sake—certainly not!—but you couldn't do your best work unless the others in your office were willing to help you.

Leaving on time was a simple sacrifice to make for them.

She pulled open the desk drawer and got her beret. Then, as she was putting it on, she remembered.

In the other drawer were the clay models.

She opened the drawer and pulled them out. She had barely reduced them to a single amorphous lump when Mr. Fredericksohn passed her desk.

"What's that?" he said. "Clay?"

"A nephew of mine," Gloria said coolly. "He like to play with clay. I bought some and I'm taking it home."

"Ah," Mr. Fredericksohn said. "Of course. Good night."

And he was gone. Gloria put the clay back into the drawer and reached for her beret.

Harold Meedy called from across the room: "Going home?"

"That's right," she said.

"Can I charter a bus and drop you somewhere?"

"I'm afraid not," she said. "I've really got to get right home."

"Listen," Harold said. He came over to her desk. "I've been trying to get somewhere with you ever since you walked into this office. Now, what's wrong with me? I haven't been able to get to first base. Don't you like me?"

"Mr. Meedy," Gloria began, "it's just that . . . well, I don't believe in interpersonal relations on that level, not in the office. I'm sorry."

He blinked. "You really believe that, don't you?"

"Of course I do," she said.

"But—" He shrugged. "O.K. O.K. I just wanted to know."

The door closed behind him. Gloria felt a little relieved. If matters had gone on the way they'd threatened, why, she might have had to change Harold Meedy's mind for him. Not that it would have done him any harm, but . . . well, she just didn't like doing that sort of thing for purely personal reasons.

She was glad she hadn't had to tamper with him at all.

And now it was over, and she could forget about it. Humming under her breath, she put her beret on at last, and gave the stack of folders a pat to keep them absolutely neat, before she left the office.

She still felt a little sad about leaving on time, when there was so much work to be done. But tomorrow, she told herself, she would be able to get back to helping people. Tomorrow—

Tomorrow.

Ten minutes to nine, and Gloria put her beret away, reached for the first folder—and froze.

A second later the door opened. Gloria looked up and smiled helpfully. "Mrs. Wladek," she said. "Is there anything I can do for you? This isn't your day for—"

"It is not my day," Mrs. Wladek said. She closed the door behind her. "This, I know. But I am here. Does this mean anything to you?"



Gloria forced her face to remain expressionless. "Can I help you in any way?" she said. "Is there anything I can do?"

"You?" Mrs. Wladek barked. "You have done enough. I am not here to see you. But your supervisor, your boss—him, I will see."

"My supervisor?" Gloria looked round. "He isn't here yet."

"He will be here later?"

"Of course he will," Gloria said.

Mrs. Wladek sat down in a chair next to Gloria's desk. "I will wait," she announced. "And you should know that there is nothing you can do to me now." She reached into her bag and brought out a small wooden cross she had brought with her from the old country. She waved it at Gloria wildly.

"Do anything to you? What do you mean, Mrs. Wladek?"

"Hah," Mrs. Wladek said. "You need not pretend with me. This frightens you. No?"

Gloria blinked. "I'm afraid not," she said.

"But . . . you are trying to fool me," Mrs. Wladek said. "And I will not be fooled. I wait here for your boss, your supervisor."

There was nothing else to do. "All right," Gloria said.

Everybody stared, of course, but none of the other workers came over to find out why Mrs. Wladek had come in on a day that wasn't her appointment day. With Mrs. Wladek right there, asking questions just wasn't possible. Gloria tried to get some work done, but that wasn't possible

either, and she resigned herself at last to sitting quietly and waiting for Mr. Fredericksohn's arrival.

She promised herself she'd make up for the loss of time by taking a shorter lunch hour, and that relieved her mind a little. But she did hope Mr. Fredericksohn would be early.

Thankfully, he was. At nine twenty-five exactly, the door opened and Mr. Fredericksohn entered. He glanced once round the office, saw Mrs. Wladek and went on. A second later he stopped.

He didn't have a chance to say anything. Mrs. Wladek was at his side. "I must see you at once," she said. "I must see you alone, at once."

He stared at her. "Miss Scott here, I'm sure, can—"

"It is about Miss Scott that I want to talk to you," Mrs. Wladek hissed.

Mr. Fredericksohn glanced at Gloria. She busied herself with papers. At last he said: "Come with me," and led Mrs. Wladek down the aisle into his private office. The door closed.

Ten minutes passed and the door opened. Mr. Fredericksohn's head projected. "Miss Scott," he said. "May I see you for a minute?"

The curiosity in the office was almost a solid pressure, but Gloria paid it no attention. She said: "Certainly," put away the folder she had been consulting, and went in.

There, at the side of Mr. Fredericksohn's desk, Mrs. Wladek was sitting, looking determined, grim and baffled all at once. Gloria stood in front of the desk and Mr. Fredericksohn seated himself behind it, the large open window at his back.

"Yes, Mr. Fredericksohn?" Gloria said.



"I have told him all," Mrs. Wladek said. "All. Everything. Total."

"Er . . . yes," Mr. Fredericksohn said. He faced Gloria resolutely. "Mrs. Wladek has said something about a . . . about a spell. Do you know what she might be talking about? Something you said, some impression you gave her—"

"A spell?" Gloria shook her head. "I can't think how she got that idea," she said calmly.

"You do not fool him," Mrs. Wladek said. "He knows. I have told him all."

"Certainly," Mr. Fredericksohn murmured. "But perhaps some little thing—"

"My report will be ready in an hour," Gloria said. "But I'm sure there was nothing."

Mr. Fredericksohn coughed convulsively. "I suppose not," he said. "I realize this is rather unpleasant for you—"

"I quite understand," Gloria said.

Mrs. Wladek came out of her chair in a single movement and clutched Gloria by the left arm. "What is happening?" she demanded.

Mr. Fredericksohn avoided her eye. "Please sit down," he said. And then, to Gloria: "Miss Scott, if you'll make the call . . . you know what I mean?"

"Of course," she said.

"The—" He whispered it: "The hospital?"

"What did you say?" Mrs. Wladek demanded. "What did you tell her?"

Gloria disengaged herself and went to the door. As she shut it behind her she could hear Mrs. Wladek's voice, rising to a crescendo of threats and abuse, and Mr. Fredericksohn's calm, scholarly attempts to stem the tide. She almost smiled.

Then she went to her own desk and picked up the telephone.

Actually, she told herself, matters had worked out for the best. Rudi had a job, and would grow into a fully functioning member of society. Mrs. Wladek would not be on the relief rolls any longer.

And what Mrs. Wladek wanted—a place to live, and someone to take care of her—would certainly be provided for her.

Yes, everything had worked out for the best. And, next time, she'd be able to handle a situation like Mrs. Wladek's with less trouble. Gloria looked into the future—into a long series of days and weeks, helping people, getting them to do what was best for them. Oh, sometimes they wouldn't like it right away, but you had to expect that. What was best for them—

Gloria smiled to herself quietly, and dialed a number.

On the second ring, a voice said: "Bellevue Admitting."

"We'd appreciate your sending an ambulance and attendants right away," Gloria said. "For the psychiatric wards."



## *Afterword*

### *to*

### **“Hex”**

“HEX” IS ONE of the very few science fiction stories built around social welfare work (another is Barry Malzberg’s “How I Take Their Measure,” published in *Fantasy & Science Fiction* a decade after “Hex” and a decade ago). Its primary theme—not of witchcraft, of course, but of parapsychology—has been more often treated in the field, perhaps most prominently in Jerome Bixby’s famous and frightening short, “It’s a Good Life.” In its own way, “Hex” is every bit as chilling as the Bixby—a dead-serious story despite its quiet style and light tone. (Some readers might consider it fantasy, not science fiction; the existence of clairvoyance, telekinesis, mind control, and other parapsychological powers has long been debated, never scientifically proven, and is still a matter of individual belief. Which makes the fact that the story first appeared in *Astounding* of particular interest: it would seem to indicate

that John Campbell, for all his avowed beliefs in pure science and proven technology, gave some credence to the paranormal.)

Born Larry M. Harris in 1933, Laurence Janifer has been a writer, editor, and anthologist of science fiction for close to twenty-five years. At the precocious age of nineteen, he was the editor of the short-lived *Cosmos Science Fiction* magazine (four issues in 1953–1954), while at the same time pursuing his fiction-writing career. In addition to numerous s-f stories in the fifties—some of the best of which are included in his 1968 Belmont collection, *Impossible?*—he wrote three novels with Randall Garrett, as by “Mark Phillips,” which were first published in *Astounding* and which were later done in book form by Pyramid: *That Sweet Little Old Lady*, *Out Like a Light*, and *Occasion for Disaster*. Each of these featured an FBI agent named John J. Malone and were science-fictional pastiches of the work of mystery writer Craig Rice, whose best-known detective hero was Chicago lawyer John J. Malone. (One of Janifer’s two Random House mystery novels, *The Pickled Poodles*, as by Larry M. Harris, is also about Malone the lawyer and was a one-shot attempt to continue the Rice series.)

*You Sane Men*, perhaps Janifer’s best science fiction novel, appeared from Lancer in 1964 and was later reissued as *Bloodworld*. Other novels have followed at somewhat irregular intervals. Of the science fiction anthologies he has edited, the best is *Master’s Choice* (Simon & Schuster, 1966).

B. P.



## *Afterword:*

### *Serendipity*

**Bill Pronzini**

"WE CAN use my Fifties essay as the introduction," Barry Malzberg said when he asked me to co-edit this anthology. "So why don't you go ahead and do the Afterword—make it about two thousand words."

"Fine," I said. "But what am I going to write about? You've already said just about everything in your essay, and what's left you or I will cover in the individual afterwords."

"Write a nice mournful/lyrical essay on the highwater mark for the mystery in the *Black Mask* thirties," he said, "and what and why and whither decadence in art when it hits."

I considered that. It's a fine idea; I could do a nice mournful (though maybe not lyrical) 2,000-word essay on the topic without too much trouble. But then, why would a reader of an anthology of fifties science fiction want to read it? If said reader

was strictly a student/aficionado of science fiction, he wouldn't know what the hell I was talking about. (I assume nearly everyone has heard of *Black Mask*, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and James M. Cain—but how many nonmystery buffs know who Carroll John Daly was? Or who Cap Shaw, Rogers Terrill, and Fanny Ellsworth were? Or who and what were all the other important writers, editors, and magazines I would have to mention?) I decided that such an essay would be both confusing and inappropriate to an anthology of this type—at least on an in-depth basis and at a full 2,000 words.

There are, however, a number of parallels between the mystery-suspense and science fiction genres—and one major difference relevant to this anthology—and so a brief general statement strikes me as being acceptable. Bear with me, if you will. Five hundred words, maximum.

As I've written elsewhere, the two fields are more closely related than the casual observer might believe. Both were more or less born in this country in the twenties, as products of the great pulp era; both have writers whose best work is as good as—if not sometimes better than—anything published in contemporary American literature, and yet who are grossly underpaid, often mistreated, and more often ignored by the publishing establishment; both have suffered the same general decline in steady markets over the past twenty years; and both have undergone a similar struggle for "legitimacy" and seem to have arrived as "respectable" art forms at about the same time, judging from academia's growing (and not



altogether beneficial) interest in them in this past decade.

The major difference between the fields, aside from the obvious one of subject matter/approach, is that they seem to have peaked at completely different periods. While science fiction achieved its highwater mark in the fifties (or so we contend here), the mystery came of age, largely through the work of Hammett and Chandler, in the Depression thirties. Prior to that time, it was primarily a British art form, and a somewhat stiff and corseted one at that; Hammett and Chandler adapted it, roughened it through the use of realism, and evolved it into an American art form. Which it remains today, despite claims to the contrary on both continents. (The British write the best adventure fiction in the world, and some of the best science fiction; with a few notable exceptions; and now that Agatha Christie is gone, they write some of the worst mystery fiction—and I can defend that statement at some length, if anyone is interested.)

In the forties the crime story, on the whole, began to decline. And in the fifties, ironically, while science fiction was reaching new heights, the mystery sank into a quagmire of stale ideas and inept and derivative writing. There was a proliferation of magazines during that decade, just as there was in science fiction, but most of them published second-rate stories; even the best magazines in the field seemed to have had trouble finding a decent percentage of quality work. Noteworthy hardcover novels were few and far between, and the staggering amount of paperback



originals produced were done in the main by Chandler/Hammett/Cain imitators and were 95 percent shlock. Of all the classic stories and novels published in the category in the past fifty years, very few—I can only think of a handful—are from the fifties.

It was only in the mid-sixties—and more prominently in the seventies—that the mystery entered into a period of rebirth. The writers who have come into the field in the past fifteen years or so have infused it with new ideas, new directions, new enthusiasm and vitality—a kind of “New Wave” totally unlike that which came into science fiction at about the same time and yet similar in purpose and achievement. There is a general equality of excellence between the two genres today (another statement I stand ready to defend), and both seem, happily, to be proceeding on an upward, parallel course into permanent places in the mainstream of American literature.

Enough said on the subject. I rest my case.

Why did we choose the Budrys novelette as the title story of this anthology? I imagine it’s rather obvious, considering the theme. Still, a bit of background seems in order.

*The End of Summer* was not our first choice, nor even our favored choice—though admittedly it is the best of all possible titles for the book. We began by calling it *The Fifties*, after Malzberg’s essay, but that seemed a little too bland. We then came up with three other possibilities, all of which were titles of stories we planned to use. One was “The End of Summer.” The second was Fritz Leiber’s “Try and Change the Past,” which



we decided was almost—but not quite—appropriate.

It was the third one we preferred—from an Astounding story by Mark Clifton—and we would probably have used it if certain internal problems had not kept us from including the Clifton piece. It's a bit too much of an ironic statement, I suppose, typical of professional writers who have been in science fiction or any other field for a number of years, but I still like it and I wish we had been able to use it:

### *What Have I Done?*

Some knowledgeable readers may wonder what I'm doing here in the first place. I am primarily a mystery-suspense writer, and my credentials in science fiction are minor indeed: one other anthology co-edited with Barry Malzberg (*Dark Sins, Dark Dreams*, Doubleday 1978), one fantasy anthology, and a few more than a score of published short stories—several of those, again, with Malzberg. On the basis of that, my views on science fiction in the fifties (and on science fiction in general) may seem suspect, if not irrelevant.

But the fact is, I have been reading and collecting science fiction for ten years; and I like to think of myself as a fairly astute critic of this and other types of fiction. Too, my admiration for the field and its best writers is considerable. (If I had begun reading science fiction in my teens, instead of or along with crime fiction, perhaps I would have been able to do a greater and more ambitious body of work in the category; but the creative part of my mind seems to have been too well-trained during

my “formative years” and seldom comes up with anything other than suspense-type ideas. Which may well be a blessing, of course. A writer, if he is smart, keeps on doing what he does best, even though he might sometimes wish it were otherwise. I would much rather be a successful suspense writer than a failed science fiction writer.)

Anyhow, I have read a great deal of science fiction and fantasy since 1968. I began with some of the work that was being done at that time in the magazines and liked it for the most part; but when I became interested in a particular type of fiction (I was on a Western kick for a while and recently became enamored—if that’s a proper term—of horror stories) I want to go back into its past to study styles, subject matter, evolutions.

The science fiction of the thirties and forties was (and still is) a delight; as a collector and aficionado of the pulps, I was impressed by the relative quality of material in the issues of *Astounding*, *Thrilling Wonder*, *Planet*, *Unknown*, and *Weird Tales* that I read. But it wasn’t until I delved into the work of the fifties that I began to realize what—for me, at least—science fiction was all about.

I first discovered the early issues of *Galaxy* in 1970 (in, of all places, a secondhand multilanguage bookstore in Palma, on the island of Majorca, where I was living at the time); I devoured every issue in stock and bought more through the mails. And went on to the Boucher/McComas *F&SF*, to the fifties *Astounding*, to Fred Pohl’s *Star* series, to novels and collections by Robert Sheckley, William Tenn, Fred Brown, Henry Kuttner, C. M. Kornbluth, Richard Mathe-



son, Damon Knight, and others. Where my reading of science fiction and fantasy prior to that time, even in the pulps, had been sporadic at best, there were whole months in 1970 (and in 1971–1972 after I moved to West Germany) when I read little else. And all of it, with a few exceptions, was from the fifties.

I became a believer then and I'm still a believer now: the thirties and forties may have been science fiction's "Golden Years," and the sixties and seventies may have been its changeling "New Wave" era, but the fifties were the "Great Summer," during which it came of age.

It will be sometime in 1979 before this anthology appears; by the time it reaches its full potential audience, the year will be 1980. Two decades, then—close to one generation—since the end of the fifties.

And the end of summer.

































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